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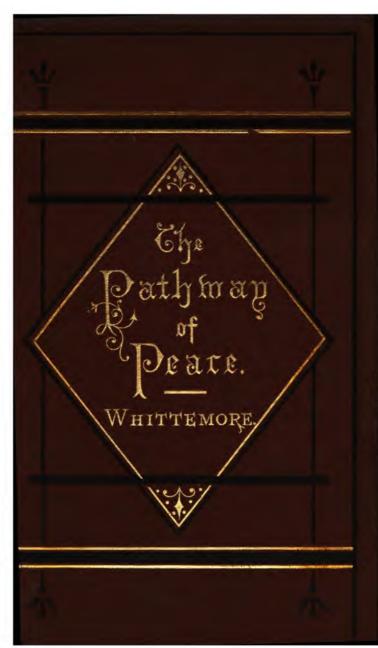
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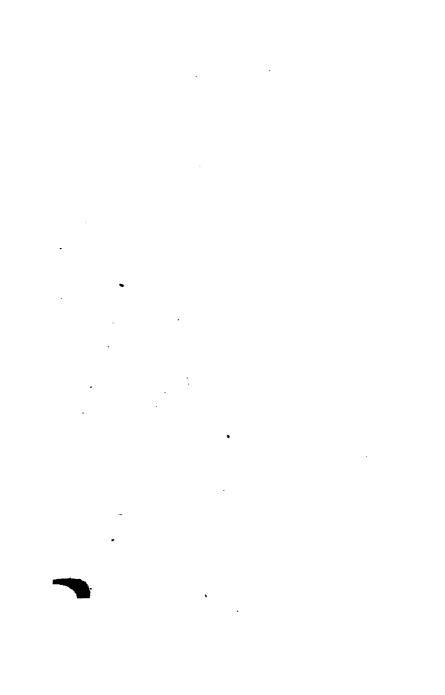
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### THE

# PATHWAY OF PEACE.

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THE.

## PATHWAY OF PEACE.

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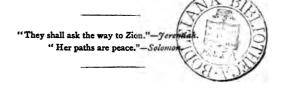
### Counsels and Encouragements

FOR

THE EARNEST INQUIRER.

BY

W. MEYNELL WHITTEMORE, D.D.



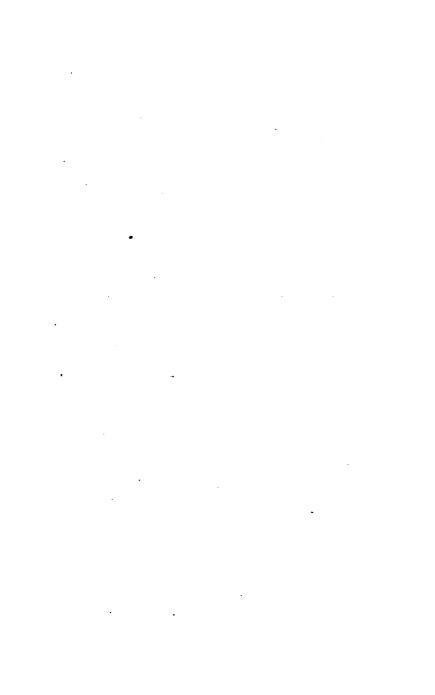
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### PREEACE.

POR some years past, my work as a clergyman, and also as an editor of magazines for the young, has brought me into correspondence with young people in various parts of the world. Many of them have written to me, earnestly seeking for Christian counsel as inquirers after the way of salvation; and it has been among the most deeply interesting details of my ministry, to reply to these inquirers, and to endeavour to lead them into the Pathway of Peace. In this way, pleasant and lasting friendships have been formed between myself and numbers of dear young persons, whom I probably shall never meet on earth, but with whom I humbly trust to unite in singing the New Song around the Throne.

This frequent interchange of thought and feeling with correspondents, differing in character and in the circumstances of their earthly life, varying also in the colour and tones of their spiritual realizations, has made me acquainted with the hearthistory of the young more familiarly than a Christian

minister can ordinarily expect to become; and it has seemed a duty to me, that I should strive to make the experience thus acquired instrumental of good as widely as possible. And, as I am thankful to believe that the extensive correspondence to which I refer, has not been without beneficial results to those who have written to me, I thought that what did good to them might do good to others; especially as similar religious difficulties were likely to meet most young persons who were anxious about their own spiritual welfare. I, therefore, resolved to include answers to as many of these inquiries as I could bring within the compass of a small volume. I cannot suppose it will answer every inquiry which might be made on the subject of religion, but I believe it touches on all the points which are essentially important.

I have written this book, designedly, in the homely style of a plain, personal address, believing that I shall thus be the more likely to come home to the heart of my reader. Mere grace of composition has been regarded as altogether foreign to this purpose. Its only aim is to be useful. And I now send it forth on, its mission of earnest love, trusting that God will be pleased to bless it as a guide into the Pathway of Peace.

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ENCOURAGEMENTS .



### CHAPTER I.

#### IN THE WRONG PATH.

OOK at that bright-winged butterfly as it roves from flower to flower, sometimes staying its flight for a moment or two, and then suddenly darting onwards, intent on nothing but the gratification of its own fancies. Is it not an apt emblem of a giddy, trifling spirit, seeking momentary pleasures in a gay unconsciousness of any serious purpose of living?

True, that little insect fulfils *its* purpose of life; yet as I watch its airy flight it seems to me strikingly suggestive of people I have met whose idea of life never rises higher than that of a kind of butterfly existence.

They want to be always amused. They are constantly on the look-out for a new entertainment. You would never infer from their words and actions that there was another world towards which Time was rapidly bearing them. You might rather suppose they were always to inhabit this. No thought of preparation for a departure, no anxious questioning as to the future, seems to disturb the bright gaiety of their present career.

Alas for these insects, sporting their brief but

joyous hour! Where will they fold their wings when the sunshine disappears, and the cold and dark night gathers round them?

And such were you once.

Such, I rejoice to believe, you are not now, or you would not care to read a grave book like this.

For it is indeed a grave book that I have written for you. Not gloomy, but serious. Not designed to amuse you, but to deepen the spiritual concern which has led you to ask how you may be truly happy.

I take it for granted that you have some religious anxiety. You are not satisfied to continue a giddy trifler. Not only "the thought of something after death," but also—and, perhaps, chiefly—a feeling of dissatisfaction with earthly scenes and pleasures, and of unrest growing out of that, impels you to seek for Christian counsel.

You want some one to guide you. You desire a clearer conception of the things that make for your peace. You ask, How shall I know my right path in life?

Gladly will I endeavour to enlighten you. I am not a stranger to the difficulties in your way, but know well the anxieties which distress your mind. I have passed through a similar experience myself. I have learned the history of many other religious inquirers. What has helped us, will, under God's blessing, help you.

You are only young in years, and the landscape of life stretches itself before you, just as the natural landscape does before a traveller who views it from some rising ground—a varied and beautiful prospect of hill and dale, meadows, orchards, rivers, and forests, lighted up by the full radiance of the sun, and charming the mind by the sweet picture of an earthly paradise. You know how you have longed for the actual realisation of that beautiful picture. Your heart has been merry and light as you travelled on, saying to yourself, "I mean to enjoy life and to be very happy. My way shall be one of pleasantness, my path one of peace."

Your heart is not so merry and light just now.

Were you, then, wrong in your anticipations? Ought we not to expect to be happy? Are we meant to be miserable, sighing and sorrowing, and mourning over disappointed hopes?

And, if not, why are you not so happy now? What is it that comes in and spoils your bright vision, and makes a void in your heart, and checks the current of your rejoicing? Ah, what is it?

Certainly it is not wrong to wish to be happy. I wish it for you. I have no sympathy with those who would cloud over your bright anticipations, by croaking dolefully about your future life. I would rather sing a song than toll a dirge. God means all his creatures to be happy, intensely happy, and He has given floods of sunbeams for the most insignificant mote to dance in.

Only I am not quite sure that you know the right way to be happy. I desire to point out that way, to show you the secret of true and durable enjoyment. The way of salvation is a way of pleasantness and a path of peace.



### CHAPTER II.

WHY YOU ARE NOT HAPPY.

THERE are two reasons why you should be unhappy. Reasons which, if conscience is truly awakened, must make you unhappy. These are—A sense of unforgiven sin.

And a consciousness of unreconciled feelings towards God.

Now you will, I know, be quite ready to acknowledge yourself a sinner. Everybody joins in a general confession of guilt. The most solemn litany finds its responses ready enough on the lips, if not in the hearts, of congregations of worldly persons. But it is quite a different thing to make this a matter of distinct personal experience and acknowledgment. "Against Thee have I sinned!" "I am a sinful man, O Lord!" "God be merciful to me a sinner." These are not the strains of an artificial penitence, but the sincere outpouring of heartfelt emotions. Have you thus felt about sin? Not that all are sinners, but that you are? Has this conviction of sin come home to you as a matter of personal realization?

Not perhaps so distinctly and personally as is desirable, yet sufficient to account for your present want of peace. You know enough about God's requirements and your own non-fulfilments to feel

uneasy and anxious. Things are not quite right with you. That you can see. And that is sufficient to disturb your mind.

Let us consider carefully how things are with you. You are a creature of God, and as such, bound to glorify Him. He is also your preserver, and every moment is laden with blessings from his bountiful hand. You owe Him gratitude for his providential mercies. He is also your sovereign, justly entitled to your obedience. He has given you a law, so that you are responsible for a knowledge of his will. That law is also written on your heart, for your conscience either accuses or excuses you (Rom. ii. 15).

But you have disobeyed that law, and brought yourself under its penalties. You have sinned in thought, word, and deed. Read through the Ten Commandments, and ask yourself whether you have not in letter or in spirit failed to comply with them. If you were to write down on paper all the wrong things you have said and done, would you like to show that paper to anyone?

Yet God knows. You need not write the account for Him: He has already written it. It is in his Book (Rev. xx. 12).

Ah, and much that your memory now could not recall, is recorded in that Book. Forgotten sins will one day come to light.

But besides sinning actively, you have also sinned negatively. Now people often describe sinfulness as doing wrong things; but, sinfulness is being sinful. You may have a sinful heart, even without doing sinful things.

For example, shut up a thief in prison, and you make him an honest man. He cannot help being honest, for it is impossible for him to steal now. But he may have a thief's heart still. He may have the *love* of stealing, though he has not the *opportunity* of stealing. And so you may, by force of circumstances, avoid the commission of certain sins, and yet be in a sinful state of mind.

And out of this sinful state of mind, evil acts are likely to spring, just as branches are likely to shoot upwards and outwards from the root of a tree. You may cut off a branch here and there, but so long as there is life in the root, so long will new branches grow out of it.

You have probably not thought much of this. You have supposed that you were a sinner, chiefly in reference to words and actions, and also, perhaps, to inward feelings, such as sudden risings of anger, discontent, &c. You have not felt that the state of your heart was wrong.

Now God, who seeth not as man seeth, looks at your heart. However fair your outward life may seem, He sees that you are wrong within.

But in what is your heart wrong? How may you judge its state?

You have preferred self to God. You have not in your heart recognised Him as your sovereign. You have done some things to please Him, but He has not had your exclusive preference. He may have had your hands, your feet, your money, your time, your talents, your influence, but He has not had you. He regards this as a great sin (Deut. vi. 5., Prov. xxiii. 26., Isa. xxix. 13).

Here, perhaps, you do not quite agree with me. Your conduct has on the whole been so exemplary, that you are not prepared to allow that you have so sinful a heart. Obedient to your parents, attentive to your family and social duties, kind and even self-denying in your consideration of all around you, possessing a natural horror of all double-dealing, meanness, selfishness and greediness, you are ready to say, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up." (Matt. xix. 20).

I agree with you in this estimate. I concede that you are a far better person than some other people are whom I know, and whose title to heaven I still think surer than yours. Remember what Jesus said about some very excellent persons (Matt. v. 20).

To make my statement plainer, I must draw an illustration for you.

A poor boy was found by a farmer one evening seated by the roadside, with his bundle beside him, and kindly taken into the house. He was forlorn, hungry, and footsore. His story was a sad one—no parents, no home, no friends. The tarmer compassionately took him into his service, and found him an active, honest, hard-working servant. He was obliging to everybody, and good-natured to the little children. All joined in the praises of Ben. After some time, however, the farmer was astonished to discover that Ben's story was false, and that he had run away from home, leaving his mother in sad distress, as she did not know where he had gone. So the farmer and his wife

called the boy into the parlour to talk to him. "You must go and see your mother, Ben," they said, "your poor mother! Think what she must have suffered!"

But no, the boy said he did not want to go back, and never meant to. "Then you can write, Ben. Think how kind she has always been to you, how hard she has toiled for you since your father's death. Write to her." But Ben's heart was hard and cold, and he only looked sullen and offended as he was thus reasoned with. "Ben is doing very wrong," said the farmer's wife to her husband afterwards; "to be sure, he is kind to the children and obliging to us, and a good boy to work, but I can't help thinking all the time how wickedly he treats his mother. Such disobedience and ingratitude, such unfeeling conduct, take away all the pleasure we have in his other good qualities. The very first thing he ought to do is to return to his mother, ask her forgiveness, and comfort her poor sorrowing heart, and then he can come back and live with us. As it is, we cannot approve of him."

Nor could any one else approve of him. You could not, I am sure.

And yet is not this the way you have treated your Maker, Father, Friend, and Saviour? You have gone away from Him. You maintain no intercourse with Him. Your heart is not in its true home. And yet, while thus estranged from God, it is quite possible to be kind and amiable towards those around you, honest and industrious in your daily calling, and in the possession of

many commendable qualities. Still, after all, you are living wrong.

And no amount of what might be called goodness can make up for this wrong living. Ben might have said to himself, "I don't feel exactly comfortable, as I think of my poor mother; but I will work harder, and be still kinder to my master, and his children, and my fellow-servants." And we can suppose him rising before it is light, and going the last in the house to bed, and taking scarcely ever a holiday, and laying by his savings carefully, and winning golden opinions from everybody. They would say, "What a good boy Ben is." But this goodness would not make up for his continuing to live in neglect of his filial duty.

In fact, it would be an aggravation of his sin against his parent; it would show he knew how to be a good boy to all around him, and so would leave him without excuse in not being a good boy to his mother.

You can easily apply this, dear reader, to yourself. You have a good character, you say, for amiability, industry, and generosity. You are truthful, grateful, and ready to help anyone who needs your assistance. All your friends speak well of you. They think you good.

And yet, not good to God! Not thoughtful for Him! At home elsewhere than in his presence! Away from Him, and preferring to be away! How strange is this!

If you were a morose, disagreeable person, whom everyone disliked, I should not wonder if God did not possess your regard; but it is strange that

you are naturally tender-hearted, and kind, and sympathising, and everyone finds you so—except one Friend. You are far off from Him.

Surely this is very wrong. So far from extenuating your guilt as a sinner, it increases it. It shows that it is quite possible to let God have your heart.

What is it that keeps you from returning to God? What kept Ben from returning home? Self-will. You choose to keep away.

But why? If God is your Father and Friend, why should it be difficult to return to Him?

What hindered the Prodigal's return? His love of pleasures which he could not enjoy in the pure and peaceful home of his childhood. His tastes differed from his father's tastes. Judged by the home-standard of rectitude, he knew he was wrong; but he liked to be wrong. The humble, quiet, frugal farming life was uncongenial with his sinful desires. His heart was altogether against what his father cared for. And so he preferred the riotous living in a far country (Luke xv. 13).

And in all this he was a striking and affecting picture of our fallen nature in general; for the carnal mind is at enmity against God, for it is not reconciled to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. viii. 7).

You are in this unreconciled state. Your heart is not in harmony with God. So long as you keep your present disposition of mind, so long you will find it impossible to make God's requirements and your inclinations agree.

When you are awakened to the consciousness of

this, I do not see how you can help being unhappy. For you know that God ought to have you. Your soul ought to return to its only true rest (Ps. cxvi. 7). And yet you may not wish to make this self-surrender. You may like to please yourself. And may determine to do it. But, with the light which is shining into your mind, you cannot make that determination easily. You must be unhappy.

You must be still more unhappy as you reflect how God regards you. What does He think about you? Is He pleased? Was Ben's mother pleased with the absence of her child? Would she have been pleased to hear how well he was behaving in a stranger's house? Would she not still have been displeased with his undutiful conduct? Might not Ben reasonably expect to find his mother angry if he did return home? A similar train of thought in your mind is calculated to sadden you. God must be angry with you. His very love—far deeper than any earthly parent's—must make Him displeased with your conduct. He cannot like the way you have treated Him.

Nor is it proper that He should be indifferent to it. It is right He should be offended with your want of affection, of sympathy and obedience. Your ungrateful neglect is an insult to Him, who is your Creator, and your Friend.

And you believe He is angry. You know you deserve his displeasure. You know you have gnevously sinned against Him, and his Word assures you that "He is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. vii. 11), and "His wrath abideth

on every soul that doeth evil" (John iii. 36; Rom. ii. 9). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. x. 31). Such texts as these must make you miserable.

And you never will be happy so long as you lie under the burden of unforgiven sin, and so long as your heart is not brought into harmony with God. In the midst of your gayest scenes, when earth's sunshine gilds your pathway, and your lot is envied by those who delight in your companionship, you will have a sense of unreality in the mirth, your heart will have an "aching void," and you will feel your wretchedness all the more that you are forced to conceal it under the semblance of a smile.

You never can be happy till you return to your heavenly Father. Your present want of peace may teach you this. Here are words which describe your state, written by a holy and devoted Christian minister (the Rev. George Wagner):—

"When the Spirit of God enlightens the sinner's mind, and opens his heart, when he becomes conscious for the first time of his own exceeding sinfulness, and the alienation of the heart from God, when he feels that he cannot any more seek his rest in the creature or the world, and cannot be contented without the forgiveness of sins, and reconciliation to God, oh! then, self-condemned and weary, he often cries in his secret chamber, unheard by the ear of man, 'Oh! that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat'! No heart can be drawn by the Spirit of Jesus without this longing to find God."

To find God! Yes, this is what you need. This, I believe, is what you desire. You have learned that away from Him you are sinning not only against Him, but also against your own soul.

Will you, then, return to Him?

But, here is a difficulty in the way of your return. If you are willing, will God be willing too? You hope He will.

But how may you be sure of this? How may you be certain that if you are willing to return to your Father, He will be willing to receive you? The Prodigal Son had no right to expect his father to receive him again as his child, nor did he express any hope of this; he only thought his father might so far forgive him as to make him "as one of his hired servants." Indeed, his elder brother did question the justice of reinstating him in his forfeited place as a son; he said it was unfair that so undutiful and profligate a man should share the home privileges as fully as if he had led an upright, virtuous life (Luke xv. 29, 30). Some such doubts may possibly enter your mind. You have left your Father's love, and care, and presence. You have lived for self. And now will He receive you again?

Is it right that He should?

How would Ben's mother have been likely to receive him? Could he feel sure she would forgive him, if he went home? or would she say, "No, I have quite done with you; you have turned your back on me, and I have therefore resolved to disown you?" He might hope she would not reject him. From his past experience of her kindness of disposition, he might believe she would welcome

his return. But he would feel he had no right to be sure of it. He could not go to her and say, "Mother, you ought to pardon and receive me."

And if you, my dear friend, have become sensible of the misery of living in a state of mind which is not reconciled to God, if you wish to return to Him and beg Him to forgive you and accept you as his child, what ground have you for the assurance that He will do so? Would not God have the right to say, "No; you have chosen your path in life, I will leave you to tread it; you have forsaken Me, and I have forsaken you. I will not be friends with you again"? You may be sorry enough, but your sorrow gives you no claim on God.

Besides, we may easily see that God ought not to treat the wicked as He does the good. He ought not to "clear the guilty" (Exodus xxxiv. 7). If people do wrong, they ought to suffer for it. If a man breaks human laws, he is not only liable to punishment, but he ought to undergo it. It would neither be just nor wise that he should be released from the suffering, simply because he was sorry for having done wrong.

How, then, will it be with you? You know, from a thousand proofs of the Divine goodness, that God's tender mercies are over all his works, and may hope that He will deal indulgently with you, if you go to Him in humble penitence. But, can you know that He will have mercy upon you? Can you feel sure that He will consider it proper or right to forgive you?

Ah, my dear friend, if I could only ask you these questions, without being able to furnish answers to

them, I should feel it useless to awaken an anxiety which I could not hope to assuage. I rejoice in possessing the privilege of pointing out to you the ground—firm as a rock, for it is indeed the Rock of Ages—on which you may base your solemn yet joyful resolve, "I will arise and go to my Father!" It is the Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He died for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (r Peter iii. 18). It is His own declaration, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John xiv. 6).

Jesus has suffered in your stead. He has changed places with you. He has been treated as a sinner—that is, as if He were you—although He was altogether without sin; and you may therefore be treated as righteous—that is, as if you were Christ—if you are willing to agree that He should be your substitute (Rom. iii. 21-26).

If you are willing to agree to it! Is that all that is now necessary?

Yes, all. Your own want of faith can be the only obstacle. Jesus has made Himself your sinbearer, and his righteousness will be put to your account, if you believe in Him (2 Cor. v. 21).

A pious sailor was once heard explaining this to a shipmate. "Mark you," said he, "it isn't breaking off swearing and the like; it isn't reading the Bible nor praying, nor being good—it is none of these: for even if they would answer for the time to come, there is still the old score, and how are you to get over that? It is not anything you have done or can do: it is forsaking your sins, and expecting the pardon and salvation of your soul,

because Christ let the 'waves and billows go over Him,' on Calvary. This is believing, and believing is nothing else."

It is not something vague and mysterious which you are to do. It is, as the good sailor explained it, a simple and straightforward transaction. young friend of mine wrote to me about this:-" I used to think it was of no use to try to love Jesus until I became a Christian, and that to become one I had some great mystery to believe which I did not and could not understand." Probably many other young people need clearer views of the way of salvation. They have an idea that there must arrive some solemn moment when they shall become conscious of a supernatural influence over them, a kind of divine inspiration, and that then a great change will be wrought upon them—and that this is being converted to Christ. So they wait for this to come to pass, and think they are right in waiting.

But they are wrong. Decision for Christ may be attended by circumstances of a solemn and even awful kind, as in the case of Saul's conversion—but the appalling sounds, the light, the being struck to the ground, the temporary blindness, did not constitute the conversion of the persecutor, nor were they a proof of it. His conversion was his believing in Jesus.

Captain Hedley Vicars came down one morning to his room in great distress of mind. He was bowed down under a sense of guilt. "Oh, wretched man!" he said to himself. Just at that moment he caught sight of a text in his Bible which lay open; it was these words: "The blood of Iesus

Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Then it can cleanse me from *mine!*" he said. From that hour till he lay bathed in his own blood in the trench, he never again was burdened by the weight of his sins. He knew that Christ had taken them all away by suffering on his behalf.

Do you still hesitate?

"Ah," you may say, "I see that God can forgive me. But will He? I see it would be right if He wished it, to forgive and receive me; but does He wish it?"

He does wish it. He waits to be gracious. "He willeth not that any should perish." Look for the following texts; they will assure you of God's readiness to receive you:—Isa. i. 18, xxx. 18, xxxviii. 17, xliii. 25, lv. 7, lvii. 15; Jer. iii. 12, 22, ix. 24, xxix. 11, xxxi. 20; Ezek. xviii. 23; Mic. vii. 18, 19; Rom. x. 12, 13; Eph. ii. 4—7; 2 Thess. ii. 16; 1 John iv. 9.

But, although you now see that you may return, that you ought to return, that you must be unhappy till you do return, it is possible that your desire to return is not yet sufficiently strong to induce you to retrace your wandering steps. You sigh, you wish, you weep, but you are still irresolute.

What shall I say to aid you in making the decision?

Many things might be said. One thing only do I intend now to say: Jesus loves you! But that one thing is so wonderful that I must devote a chapter to its consideration.



### CHAPTER III.

JESUS LOVES YOU.

JESUS LOVES YOU. What a glorious truth! He who is "God over all, blessed for ever," stoops down so low as to concern Himself with your welfare, and give you proofs of his affection.

This is a truth plainly revealed in the Scriptures. What Iesus has done for us shows that He loves us. "While we were vet sinners, Christ died for us;" "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. v. 8, 10). "Who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. i. 4). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). "Iesus who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i. 10). "God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. We have redemption through his blood, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. i. 3-7, ii. 13, 19). "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Being now justified by his blood, we

shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Rom. v. 1, 2, 9). "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (kev. i. 5, 6). "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood," &c. (Rev. v. 9, 12).

Now, are not these things evidences that Jesus loves us greatly? See how much He gave up—all the glories of heaven—that He might come and save us. How low He stooped, even to the death of a slave. How willingly He came. How all this was done for those who were sinners, who did not love Him, who did not want Him to be their friend. How He gained such wonderful blessings for them, setting them free from sin, opening the kingdom of heaven to them, sending the Holy Spirit to them, and giving them peace and joy through believing. Think over these things, and I am sure you will allow that He who has done so much for you, who gave Himself for you, must love you.

Besides, He says that He loves you. "I love them that love Me" (Prov. viii. 17). "I have compassion on the multitude" (Matt. xv. 32). "Suffer the little children to come unto Me" (Matt. xix. 14). "As I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John xiii. 34). "I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him" (John xiv. 21). "So have I loved you, continue ye in my love" (John xv. 9). "I will make them . . . . to

know that I have loved thee" (Rev. iii. 9). "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. iii. 19). Believers in Jesus have felt assured of this. The Apostles had no doubt that Jesus loved them. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. viii. 35). "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" (Eph. iii. 18, "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25). "Brethren, beloved of the Lord" (2 Thess. ii. 13). "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us" (1 John iii. 16).

Have you, my dear friend, realised this? You have long known that Jesus loves sinners; but have you felt assured of his love to you? Have you felt his love for you to be as real a thing as is the love of your parents or any earthly friend? A child said to me, not long ago, "Of course I have always known that Jesus loves, but I never felt before that He loves me." Well, have you felt it? Do you feel it now?

Perhaps not. You have had a vague sense of this precious love, but you have not individualised the sense of it. You have thought of it as a love of all the world, rather than as a personal affection for yourself.

Try, then, to grasp this truth—Jesus loves me. From the earliest dawn of your infancy you have been the object of Divine regard; a fonder love than that of father or mother has watched over you, guided you, guarded you, and supplied your many wants. This affection has been incessant in its actings, for by night and by day He has been doing you good. When you were a careless child, loving sin, giving way to evil passions, without one thought of God and his love, and without one feeling of prayer in your heart, although there may have been empty words of prayer on your lips; living only for this world, and seeking only to gratify sinful self-even all that time Iesus loved you. Not because you were deserving, but just because He chose to love you. Not because there was something attractive in you in spite of your sinfulness, for there was no good thing in you. Not because Jesus could not do without you, for He had all heaven to love Him. But because He is love, and fixed his love on you, and loves you still. Think, "At this present moment Jesus loves me"

Will you not love Him in return? He wants to be your friend, and asks you to be his friend. He stands knocking at the door of your heart, seeking admission. Will you not open that door, and bid Him welcome?

But, perhaps, you say, "I wish I could feel that Jesus loves me; but I don't seem able to. I know He loves sinners, and I know I am a sinner, but somehow I don't feel that He cares for me. I know my father loves me: I feel it strongly; but I.

#### THE PATHWAY OF PEACE.

don't feel it in the same way when I think of Jesus' love."

This is strange, though you are not the only one who has said the same to me.

You doubt, you say, not the fact of Christ's love in general; you believe He does love, but you doubt his love to you. It is too great a thing that a young person such as you, guilty, altogether unworthy, should be loved by One in heaven so good, and great, and glorious. No; it surely cannot be true.

How is such a doubt to be removed? If I could show you a Bible which distinctly stated the fact that "the Lord Jesus loved Robert," or, that "He gave Himself for Jane," would that satisfy you?

No; and for two reasons: first, there would need to be a Bible for every different name, which would be absurd; and secondly, because even then you might doubt and say, "Well, it is true my name is Robert, but how do I know that I am the Robert which is meant? Perhaps it is some other person of the same name that Jesus loves." So that even your name in the Bible would not remove doubt.

Besides, if He loves all, He must love each. If He has compassion on the multitude, He has compassion on each one of the multitude. Of course, it is difficult to imagine how Jesus can know and love each among so many millions of people; but, then, remember He is God as well as man, and is infinite in his power to know and love.

And because He is infinite, his love is infinite too. That love can reach to you. If you stood

by the seaside, and any one were to say to you, "Do not take any of the water out of the sea, there is none to spare for you," you would look up astonished; you would gaze over that mighty expanse stretching itself out in the distance before you, till sea and sky seemed to meet; you would mark the ample billows rolling in and spreading themselves lavishly at your feet, and then you would smile, as you stooped and dipped a shell into the water, and you would say, "I am quite sure the great sea can spare me a drop of its water." that sea is a created thing, and has its shores; it is not boundless. It would be possible for it to dry up. But the love of Jesus is an ocean without a shore; it cannot be exhausted. drop of it will fill your heart. Do you think Jesus will say He cannot spare you a drop? know what He will say, if you ask Him-"Drink abundantly, O beloved."

What has now been said is quite sufficient as a ground of faith in the Gospel truth that Jesus loves. But I can give you other reasons why you may venture to believe that you are loved by Jesus. Here are some:

Why do you live in a Christian land? You might have been a heathen, bowing down to a grotesque and hideous idol, ignorant of the true God. Who has placed you in a country where the true light has shone for ages? Has there not been kindness in this?

And you have been taught from childhood the way of salvation. The first lesson you learned at your mother's knee was a lesson about the gentle,

gracious Saviour. Was there no design of Divine love in this? Was it chance which placed you thus early under evangelical teaching? Or was it the love of Jesus?

Then you have had, I hope I may say, Christian friends who have tried to win you for Christ. I know, alas! that many dear young people have not had this advantage. Their parents are only nominal Christians, and have not striven to lead them to the Cross. But you may be among the happy number to whom pious parents have spoken about the things which make for your peace. This Christian training is one of God's many providential arrangements. What end must God have in view?

Then think of the sermons you hear in church; sermons setting before you, week after week, the great truths of the Gospel. Is it not love to you which has brought you under the joyful sound of Salvation through Jesus?

And your Bible—your open English Bible—which, thank God, you are free to read. Your Bible, which is not a sealed book, guarded from you by the sinful policy of an Apostate Church, but which you have been allowed and encouraged to read. Is not your possession of that Book an evidence of Christ's love? How full it is of Jesus! Salvation by Jesus: why, it is the old, old story, which never loses its power to charm and soothe. The story which was told in Eden in the few bright words of the first Evangelical promise, which was often couched in mysterious prophetic utterances, often veiled in metaphor, or shadowed dimly by

nte and offering; but which grew in substance and meaning as it rolled along the ages, and spoke peace and joy to many a pious heart, as it pointed to Him that should come in the fulness of time—the Saviour of a lost and perishing world. This is the True Light, which irradiates every page of the Inspired Book. And it is out of love to you that it thus shines.

Nay, if I were at a loss for an argument, I could easily find one connected with this very book which I have written for you. Why does it come in your way? Does it not show that Jesus wants to draw you to Himself, and has let this little book be one of "the cords of love"? How came it that I thought of making such a book? Do our thoughts about being useful to others come into our minds by mere accident? Does not the Bible speak of the thoughts of Christians being under subjection to Christ's law? (2 Cor. x. 5.) I believe you may regard your having this book in your hands, your present persual of it, as a sign that Jesus loves you.

With some who read this little work I may go even further. You are not careless persons, indifferent to spiritual concerns. You have thought, and wept, and tried to pray. You have desired to see Jesus, and to see Him as your Saviour and your Friend. A tear stands in your eye, and a sigh rises from your breast, even now that you read these lines. You do want to be a Christian. How comes this? What has awakened this spiritual desire?

Conversing, some years ago, with a poor woman as she stood busily at work in her little cottage

kitchen, I asked her about her progress in the Divine life. She said, that sometimes she was troubled by the fear that she might be deceiving herself, and that she was not one of Christ's people, but a thought which gave her comfort was this, that this anxiety, this wish for peace and full assurance, could not originate in her own heart. You know why (Gen. vi. 5; Ps. x. 4). And it was certain that Satan would not put it there; so that the Holy Spirit must have awakened it; and if so, it showed that God cared for her, and wished her to belong to his redeemed family. No doubt she was correct.

And I am sure, if you are conscious of the "strivings of the Spirit," if "a still, small voice" sometimes speaks within your heart, that you may regard it as the whisper of a Saviour's love, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

Once more. Why should not Jesus love you as well as He did the young man mentioned in the Gospels? (Mark x. 21.) You remember how he came to Jesus, and was not ashamed to kneel before Him in the public road, while he earnestly besought Him to make him understand the truth. And then, Jesus "beholding him, loved him." Why did Jesus love him? Was there more reason that He should love him than that He should love you? The young man, though very ignorant, yet was an honest inquirer, and really felt in earnest about religion; and you also are anxious to receive Christ's teachings. May I not say this of you? You also want to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Your religious feeling may be mixed with much spiritual ignorance, just as the young ruler's was, yet may be genuine and strong. Believe me when I say that the Lord Jesus is now beholding you, and loving you.

Will you not, then, yield yourself to the influence of that infinite love? For I think you cannot but feel its influence. Even if you do not respond to Christ's affection, you must feel how kind He is to care for you; how condescending He is to be interested in your welfare.

Ah, you may *feel* this, and feel it so strongly that tears may stand in your eyes, and sighs be breathed from your heart, and yet not quite resolve to give yourself to Jesus.

But I am not content with awakening your emotions. I want Christ's love to draw you to Himself, in the bond of an everlasting covenant. I want your heart to echo the resolve of the following lines:—

"Thou knowest, not alone as God, all knowing—
As man, our mortal weakness Thou hast proved;
On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing,
Oh, Saviour! Thou hast wept and Thou hast loved!
And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home.

"Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet,
On everlasting strength my weakness staying,
Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete.
Then rising and refreshed, I leave Thy throne,
And follow on to know as I am known."



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE WAX AND THE SEAL.

I F you have ever had one passing thought about your soul's salvation, one passing wish that you, too, were a believer in Jesus—that thought, that wish, was a religious impression.

But you have thought and wished this more than once. Your religious impressions have, probably, been many and strong.

Perhaps very early in life you first had such thoughts and feelings; so early that you do not recollect the time when such impressions were strangers to you. If you are the child of Christian parents, they, doubtless, have brought you up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The influence thus exerted must have been great.

"I have a vivid recollection," said the Rev. R. Knill, "of the effects of maternal influence. My honoured mother was a religious woman, and she watched over and instructed me as pious mothers are accustomed to do. Alas! I often forgot her admonitions; but in my most thoughtless days I never lost the impressions which her holy example had made on my mind. After spending a large portion of my life in foreign lands, I returned again to visit my native village. Both my parents died while I was in Russia, and their house is now

occupied by my brother. The furniture remains just the same as when I was a boy, and at night I was accommodated with the same bed in which I had often slept before; but my busy thoughts would not let me sleep. I was thinking how God had led me through the journey of life. the light of the morning darted through the little window, and then my eye caught a sight of the spot where my sainted mother, forty years before, took my hand and said, 'Come, my dear, kneel down with me, and I will go to prayer.' This completely overcame me. I seemed to hear the very tones of her voice. I recollected some of her expressions, and I burst into tears and arose from my bed, and fell upon my knees just on the spot where my mother kneeled, and thanked God that I had once a praying mother."

Here were religious impressions, vivid and powerful, burnt in, one might almost say, upon a child's heart by the ardour of a mother's love. Thank God for such a love, if it has also sought to win you to Christ.

And has it not been so? Do you not remember how, as a child, your heart was touched by the narrative of a Saviour's sufferings and death; how you melted into tears as tenderly you were told that all this was for your sake, because you were a sinner, and in danger of everlasting woe? You can recall the scene; the place, the hour, and the speaker are among your most permanent recollections; and you do not think it at all unnatural that a little girl should have stood, as many years ago a little girl of seven years did stand, weeping and

trembling, at the door of a minister's study, and when encouraged to explain her distress, said, "Oh, sir, I have been a great sinner all my life; I have lived seven years without God and without Christ!"—for you also, at a very early period, may have learned what it is to realize your need of a Saviour.

Or it may have been otherwise as to the date and origin of your serious feelings. Brought up among worldly people and scenes, your past life has been one of careless indifference to the things which make for your peace, and you have only now begun to think. Your religious anxiety may be only a few weeks old, and you are surprised and perplexed by finding yourself its subject.

It is because you are thus anxious that you are ready to read through this book. And it is because I assume the existence of such anxiety in your mind, that I have written it, in the hope of guiding your feet into the pathway of peace.

First, then, consider what a mercy it is that you have been awakened by Divine grace from the slumber of sin. Many around you are, spiritually, as fast asleep as was Jonah, in the ship's cabin, and under circumstances of peril of which his was an appropriate emblem. Tempests are howling around them, yet they smile with the dreamer's fancied joy. You have been like them once. But you are awake now. Awake and anxious, for you are conscious of your peril, and you long to find your little bark safe at its moorings in the haven of peace.

This is a great mercy. It is one step towards salvation, to see your need of it and to desire it.

True, it is only one step, but it is a needful step, for you will never come to Christ if you continue in a state of placid indifference. That indifference must give place to a lively spiritual concern. I earnestly trust that it is a concern which will only lose itself in sight of the Cross.

But here observe that your religious impressions are not religion itself. Anxiety about salvation is not faith in Christ. Faith will save you, anxiety will not. You will never believe if you are never anxious; but your anxiety will not necessarily lead you to believe. "What must I do to be saved?" was the cry of a very anxious heart; but the jailer was not then a saved man. There was something more to be done (Acts xvi. 31). "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" was the question of a very serious inquirer, yet when that question was answered he went away from Christ; still sorrowful, but still unsaved (Matt. xix. 22).

It is not difficult to account for the existence of these impressions, even in the case of those who remain undecided for Christ. They may arise from mere natural susceptibility. Some persons are sensitive to the slightest provocation to tears or to smiles. A pathetic appeal melts them even too readily. "They receive the word with joy" (Matt. xiii. 20). Their impulsiveness might shame real disciples, if only we could trust it (Luke ix. 57). Like Pliable, they are as ready to start on the pilgrimage as they are to be daunted by its first trial. Orpah wept and kissed Naomi, but quickly returned to her heathen friends (Ruth i. 14, 15).

This softness of feeling may become a great

snare. You must not infer that you are safe because you are so ready to weep under a faithful sermon, or during the singing of some favourite hymn, or while reading some touching biography.

Where no great natural susceptibility exists, the religious impression may be the effect of an excited imagination. One "who can play well upon an instrument" (Ezek. xxxiii. 32)—that instrument, the delicate mechanism of your heart and conscience—may have thrown some of its chords into their fullest vibrations. Your whole soul has responded to the master-touch. You, naturally calm and careless, may have been worked upon by burning words, aglow from that Word which is as a fire, till your excitement of feeling has almost become insupportable. And you think that this unusual excitement must be an evidence of piety. Surely you are a Christian, because you feel so deeply.

Ah, do you remember the incident of a celebrated French preacher who, in a sermon to a crowded audience, described the awful scenes of the last judgment in so solemn and graphic a manner that some of his hearers not only burst into tears, but sent forth piercing cries, as if they were really, at that moment, amidst the terrors of the dread assize? That was an example of what I mean by an excited imagination. It showed great power on the preacher's part. But it did not mislead him. He knew that those tears and cries were no evidences of a spiritual change. So it was that, after the tempest of feeling had a little subsided. the preacher, with an agitated countenance and solemn voice, told his audience that he was about to add something still more awful and astonishing than anything which he had yet spoken. Amid the unbroken silence he said:—"In one quarter of an hour from this time the emotions which you have just now exhibited will be stifled, the remembrance of the fearful truths which excited them will vanish, you will return to your carnal occupations or sinful pleasures with your usual avidity, and you will treat all you have heard as a tale that is told."

Another source of your religious impressions may be an awakened conscience. Conscience, that internal monitor, that vicegerent of God within, that "candle of the Lord" (Prov. xx. 27) may have shown you your sins, pronounced your doom, and upbraided you with your guilt. Oftentimes its voice has been unheard, you have been too busy. too happy to have leisure to think. But a quiet moment has come; some bereavement has made you sit alone and weep, or some sickness has shut you out for a time from life's cares and pleasures, or, in the midst of a heedless life of gaiety, you happened to awake one night and could not sleep, and so thoughts came crowding into your mind which were unwelcome, but could not be repulsed. You were alone—yet not alone, for conscience was there. And conscience went with solemn tread through all the chambers of your soul, searching every dark corner and hidden nook, and bringing many an idol sin out into open view to shame you by the sight. And then conscience spoke to you: low stern whispers of unsparing accusation; pointed to your vain and useless life, your perverted talents, your lost opportunities, your neglected privilege your scorn of a Saviour's love, your wilful self-ruin and pointed, also, to a fearful looking for a judgment and fiery indignation (Hebrews x. 27). You were forced to accompany conscience in the strange self-scrutiny. You were forced to listen the its faithful proclamation of your guilt. You coul neither evade the inquiry, nor silence the monito nor deny the charge. A sense of misery too possession of your heart, you trembled as yo thought of standing before God to be judged, yo could think of no extenuating plea; and that quie chamber became the scene of a terrible sou agony.

That was remorse. It was the result of remem bered sin. Pleasant as sin may at first seem, yet it memory bites like a serpent, and stings like a adder (Prov. xxiii. 32).

But remorse is not repentance. Judas felt re morse, and felt it as so unendurable, that he allowed it to drive him to self-destruction (Matt. xxvii. 5) Devils "believe and tremble" (James ii. 19). I is a hopeful sign if you have a "pricking in you heart," but you still need to be told, as Peter told his large and excited audience, that you are unsaved till you have come to Christ (Acts ii 37-38).

And now I must give you a second caution These religious impressions, if you rest in them as if they were enough for the purpose of your salvation, will die away, and leave you less impressible than before. While the wax is heated and soft you can indent the seal's device upon it; but let is

cool, and you may break it, but not mould it. The blacksmith can harden a soft piece of iron by repeated hammerings of it as it lies glowing on his anvil. This is called case-hardening. I fear there are also case-hardened consciences. Consciences which have felt many an application of that Word, which is compared to a hammer (Jer. xxiii. 29), which have refused to take the desired shape under its kind strokes, and which, therefore, have grown fearfully obdurate.

This is a matter of such supreme importance, that I will try to enforce my caution by extracting for you a page or two from an unpublished record of pastoral reminiscences.

It was a pleasant Sunday evening in the month of May, and the orchards in a pretty country town were full of blooming promise of abundant fruit. The cherry-trees especially presented an attractive sight, for never had they been so full of blossom. "We shall have an unusually large crop," said some people to one another, as they walked to church, and looked up at the trees on their way. "Ah," thought the clergyman, as he also was walking to church, and observing the thickly-clustered blossoms, "there seems a promise of much fruit—may it be so with the service to-night."

That service was a special one; the sermon was to be addressed to the young, and as it was not very often that a similar sermon was preached there, many young persons were hastening along the pleasant avenue which led from the old lych-gate to the equally ancient church porch, anxious to get a good seat.

The sermon that night was simple and earnest. It appealed directly to heart and conscience, and besought the young persons present to give instant heed to the things which made for their peace. It closed by a request that the elder persons in the congregation would spend a few minutes in silent prayer that their young friends might be awakened to an immediate inquiry after salvation.

The effect was very solemn; the bowed heads of a large congregation, the silent hush, the ticking of the church clock, which seemed in the stillness to be so loud, an occasional sob from some one overcome by emotion, all contributed to heighten the impressiveness of that scene. When the congregation rose, and the parting hymn was given out, tears were on many faces, and the singing was very faltering, especially when it came to that verse—

"For you the public prayer is made, Oh, pray yourselves that prayer; For you the public tear is shed, Oh, shed yourselves that tear."

One of the young persons went away that night greatly agitated. She had come on a short visit to some relatives, and had felt some curiosity in attending this special service. That curiosity had now changed to deep anxiety. The great fountains of feeling were broken up, and drawing her veil over her face, and hastening home, she excused herself from joining the family circle, and shut herself up in her own room. That night was a sleepless one. The giddy, careless girl wept in great bitterness of feeling; a strange sorrow pressed down

upon her, and she arose in the morning exhausted, but still so sad and anxious, that she resolved to lose no time in calling upon the clergyman whose ministry had impressed her in so unusual a manner.

Admitted into his study, his young visitor told the clergyman how deep an impression his sermon to the young had made on her, and "that she felt as she had never done before." He listened attentively to her recital, one made with many tears, and put a few questions chiefly to elicit the causes of this evidently great agitation of mind. Was one of these causes a consciousness of being a sinner? No. it did not seem so. The sorrow was not that of a soul to whom God's righteousness and its own guiltand vileness had been unexpectedly revealed, so that the contrast had brought self-abasement and alarm. There was something wanting even in this excessive religious grief; something which made the clergyman fear that only the natural susceptibilities had been aroused, and a merely natural excitement produced. "Oh, what shall I do?" cried the agitated girl, "I feel as I never felt before." Her friend was kind and sympathetic, and gave her good counsel, vet had painful doubts as to the spiritual character of what seemed an earnest desire to become a Christian.

And so they parted, and the next day this young person returned to her own family, resident two hundred miles away. On making subsequent inquiries, the clergyman learned that his young hearer had retained her serious impression but a short time, and after a brief interval of awakened feeling, had gone back to the world again, and was

now leading, if possible, a still gayer life as a mere butterfly of fashion. And so, for anything he knew, she remained; the first impression was the last.

This is not an uncommon instance; at least, if uncommon, it is only so as to the great intensity of feeling. The fact that religious impressions are made which pass away without the heart's yielding to the Divine claims, is a fact only too familiar in every minister's experience. Of many, alas! he has to say, "Their goodness is as the morning cloud and the early dew" (Hosea vi. 4).

Now I have no right to say I doubt the sincerity of your religious feeling, dear reader. Nor do I wish to doubt it. Your sorrow I would fain believe to be the "godly sorrow," of which the Apostle speaks (2 Cor. vii. 9-11), even that sorrow "which needs not be repented of," that sorrow which touches not only the innermost recesses of feeling in the heart, but also touches the strongest springs of action there, and so leads to newness of life. Yet, as in the case just described, it is possible to come under the most powerful excitement of feeling, without issuing from it a true disciple of Christ. "feel as you have never felt before," and yet shortly begin to act as you have ever acted before. not mistake impulse for principle, do not suppose that because you have shed many tears that they are necessarily the tears of a true penitence. the strong language of Oriental imagery, "Rivers of water may run down your eyes," and yet your heart remain unchanged. Under the influence of a strong emotion, Herod "heard John gladly." yet kept on in sin, and in the end beheaded his

favourite preacher (Matt. xiv. 10). Felix trembled, but postponed decision (Acts xxiv. 25). Agrippa was so impressed, that he was almost persuaded to be a Christian, but his "almost" was very different from the Apostle's "altogether" (Acts xxvi. 28).

"What and if the day is breaking,
Day so long by seers foretold,
When, from slumbers deep awaking,
Saints their Saviour shall behold;
Are you ready? are you ready?
Or is still your bosom cold?

"Is it cold to Him who sought thee
In this wilderness forlorn?
Cold to Him, the Friend who bought thee,
Nor complained of nail or thorn?
Are you ready? are you ready?
Or do you his yearning scorn?

"Are you clothed in bridal raiment,
Woven by anointed hands,
Given thee without thy payment,
Pledge of Love's unbroken bands?
Are you ready? are you ready?
See, the portal open stands.

"Are you ready? are you ready?
With the Saviour in the air?
Longing for that holy greeting
"With the ransomed myriads there?
If not ready, if not ready,
Oh, for that great day prepare!"



# CHAPTER V.

#### COUNSELS FOR THE ANXIOUS.

AVING cautioned you against mistaking the true character and value of your religious impressions, it is desirable that I should give you some counsels as to the way in which you should treat them.

First, then, dread the thought of losing this religious anxiety. Oh, if you, too, should become cold and dull, and hard, and never tremble when the preacher makes a solemn appeal, and never shed a tear when some Christian friend talks to you about Jesus and his love! What if you should be able to sing "The old, old story," with a cold, unfeeling heart? Let a fear of this enter your mind, it will be salutary.

Next, endeavour to strengthen and encourage your religious impressions. Do not despise them. Foster them. You cannot feel too deeply the fact that you are a sinner. You cannot sink too low in the dust of self-abasement as you remember how you have often sinned against light and against knowledge. Job was not expressing too exaggerated a feeling when he said, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 6); neither was Ezra too profound in his humiliation when, speaking in the name of himself and his nation, he

said, "O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face unto Thee, my God; for our inquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens" (Ezra ix. 6). The Apostle Paul, when he called himself the "chief of sinners" (I Tim. i. 15), was not pretending to be worse than he really was; he was only speaking under a deep sense of his own vileness, as he saw himself in the light of God's just and holy law.

Pray also to have these impressions deepened and made permanent. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He was thus promised in Old Testament times (Zech. xii. 10). Our Saviour announced Him not only as the Comforter, but also as the Reprover (John xvi. 8-11). Ask Him to convince you of sin, to make you to "know the plague of your own heart" (1 Kings viii. 38), and to render your realization of the great truths of salvation more vivid and influential. Remember that the great sin—the sin which includes all other sin—is unbelief in Christ. Pray to be enabled to feel the enormity of that sin, and to repent of it.

Need I add that you must at once break off with all sin? If you are honest, you will surely do this. You cannot be truly in earnest about salvation unless you wish to be saved from sin itself, as well as from its penalty (Titus ii. 14). And if you desire salvation from sin, you will strive against it. You must, then, resolve, in reliance upon God's grace, to have done with every sin. If dear as a right eye, pluck it out; if useful as a right hand, cut it off. Better lead a maimed and crippled earthly life, than lose heaven (Matt. v. 29-30).

This must be done thoroughly. Stop up the smallest hole through which sin has crept. What God has completely condemned, you must seek to completely destroy. Expediency may suggest the sparing of part, but God's law allows no compromises (I Saml. xv. 22). Isaiah connects the pardon of sin with its being completely forsaken (Isaiah lv. 6-7).

What sins have you to give up? You must make that the subject of close and prayerful self-examination. Examine your temper, as to malice, revenge, violent passion; your words, as to censoriousness, falsehood, backbiting, railing, "foolish talking and jesting" (Eph. v. 4); your actions, as to disobedience to parents, or masters, Sabbath-breaking, idleness, injustice, unkindness, &c. One sin wilfully kept and cherished will shut heaven's door effectually against you.

This abandonment of sin must be immediate as well as thorough. You must "make haste and delay not" (Psalm exix, 60.) Second thoughts may be preferable in secular matters, but they are not the best in religion. Paul, when he saw what his duty was, did not wait to hear what his friends would say (Gal. i. 16). Do not say, To-morrow I will give up sin. Give it up now. Let the present moment be the turning-point of a new existence.

Are you resolved? God will help you to keep your resolution. I can assure you of His gracious aid, "for this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (r Thess. iv. 3.)

You must also be careful to avoid such influences as would be injurious to you in your present

awakened state, by counteracting your religious impressions. For example, you may be constitutionally volatile and giddy, and this may be a source of danger. In a mixed company the trifling conversation may draw you away from serious thought, and unless you are strictly on your guard, your natural spirits may thus escape from the control of sobriety. The foolish mirth, the silly joking, the witless laughter to which this may lead, will not only seem to you afterwards inconsistent with Christian steadiness, but will lower the fervour of your new religious feeling. And although such merriment be only as the "crackling of thorns" (Eccles. vii. 6), yet it will tend to dissipate your anxiety about heavenly things. You will begin to think you need not be so very anxious; that, after all, there is no sin in a laugh or a joke, and that as your natural temperament inclines you to social enjoyment, there can be no harm in indulging it.

Now I am not speaking of this as sinful, but as undesirable. There may or may not be any harm in it for others, but I am sure there will be for you. You cannot afford to lose your serious tone, for it is only while you continue thoughtful, and deeply concerned about eternal things, that there is hope you will become decided for Christ.

Therefore, all gay scenes, all worldly parties, should be avoided. If to an advanced and experienced disciple they are injurious, how much more to you? The circling cup, the mazy dance, the merry song, the gay talk, may delight the senses, but will stupefy the heart. That brilliant scene does not harmonize with a quiet chamber, an open

Bible, and a heart broken on account of its sins pouring out its anguish at a throne of grace.

Am I overstating the danger? Am I making too much of your joining some large, animated party, where you will be among many young friends whom you have often met in a similar way before?

Well, here is a case in point. It will answer your questions. A few years ago there was living in a large city a young lady, who was the only child of wealthy and worldly parents. She was fond of pleasure, and from her social standing was able to range freely through all its circles. the Spirit of God met with her, awakened in her the consciousness of sin, and bowed down her heart in anguish. Her parents were in consternation; they were afraid the fashionable world would lose their daughter, its brightest ornament. They insisted upon her mixing as usual in worldly society; they filled their house with the votaries of fashion. Still the girl was serious, and her countenance wore In the gayest party she seemed an anxious look. to "see a hand they could not see, and to hear a voice they could not hear." At last these cruel parents wished her to attend a large and gay party, where pleasure was to be worshipped as its god, with unusual splendour. She hesitated. actually bribed her by the gift of the richest dress which money could procure. The daughter reluctantly consented, went to the festival, and returned without one trace of her religious emotions. was as gay as ever she had been. Her parents were delighted. But their joy was short. another week their daughter lay at the point of death. The medical opinion forbade the slightest hope. When the dying girl learned that her hours were numbered, she lay for a few minutes in perfect silence. She seemed to be looking back, and also surveying the awful future. Then rousing herself, she directed a servant to bring her rich dress, and to summon her parents. As they stood weeping near her bed, she lifted her hand, and, pointing to her dress, said to each of them, with the terrible calmness of despair, "Father! Mother! there is the price of my soul!" Thus she died.

This is an extreme case, you will say. No one will be likely to force you into gaieties of which you disapprove. Take, then, another instance.

A little girl of thirteen, who had just begun to think seriously, spoke to me one day as follows (I give her exact words): "Last winter I went to a dancing academy. I am very fond of it. Mr. and Mrs. B. said I danced the best of their pupils, and I had to go through the Minuet de la Cour and Gavotte with the sister of an assistant, who dances beautifully, and all the others were told to watch me: and that was when the room was full of lookerson, who commented on and praised my dancing, and never noticed my partner, because she was not Altogether I got very conceited, and a pupil. thought no one could dance like me; and this winter I shall go again and get a return, and I fear I shall get conceited again. And at the parties it is much the same—how beautifully Miss C. dances. What am I to do?"

Here you see the influence of worldly associations is felt to be unfavourable to the carrying out of

pious resolves. To inflate a child's mind with vanity must interfere with the supremacy of a Saviour's love. If a child feels it to be injurious, a person of maturer years ought to be still more awake to the danger.

But there is something still more difficult which I counsel you to do. This is not only to avoid worldly company, but to give up worldly friendships. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos iii. 3).

Now, it may be that you have some intimate companions whom you have long known and loved, for their agreement with you in taste, their amiability, wit and animation. But they are not in the least of a serious turn, and if they see you look graver than usual, they banter you about it and hope you are not thinking of turning Methodist or going into a cloister. If you demur to any "excess of riot" (r Pet. iv. 4), they vote you straight-laced, and sneer at your Puritanism. If they think you are in earnest, they will be equally in earnest in trying to keep you still one of them.

I do not see how you are to go on together. Your new theory of life is wide as the poles asunder from their theory of life. You will not win them over to your religious views by keeping with them, and yet trying to show that you cannot quite go with them as you used to do. They will only feel you are inconsistent, and despise the piety which cannot make a better stand (Rom. xiv. 16).

And if you can do them no good, you will do yourself much harm. The fight you may try to maintain is too unequal. They are strong in an

evil concert (Ps. lxxxiii. 5); you alone, with a piety immature, and therefore weak.

Besides, your own natural bias to evil will always be an enemy in your camp.

Resolve, therefore, that you will give up all intimate friendships with the ungodly. Pray for strength to enable you to fulfil that resolution. Do not willingly be in the company of those who are the enemies of your heavenly Friend. Christ says you are not worthy of Him if you allow any preference to be a hindrance to your discipleship (Matt. x. 37). However dear your friend may be to you, plainly and kindly state—not rudely nor pharisaically—that you dare not peril the interests of your immortal soul by continuing an intimacy which you find hurtful, and which the Word of God forbids.

This may seem harsh, but you cannot help that. And that seeming harshness may perhaps save another soul.

Be on your watch against the devices and assaults of Satan. The moment when a soul is about to yield itself up to Jesus Christ is a season of special danger. It is then that Satan discerns his prey escaping from him the spiritual fowler, that the great despot marks his slave about to become the servant of One to whom he is opposed; so it is then that he gathers all his resources, and directs the shafts of his artillery against the trembling penitent soul which is on the point of believing in Jesus. You, dear reader, must expect this. Is it likely that Satan will easily lose the grasp of your soul? Is it likely that he will easily part with you, who have for so many years been grinding in his dark

prison-house as his willing slave? No, he will earnestly endeavour to retain you in bondage. He knows that when once you are a believer in Christ, he has lost you for ever.

Do you tremble as you think of this? Oh, remember, there is One mightier than Satan, and that He is near you, able and willing to protect.

Only the matter is urgent. "Stay not in all the plain" (Gen. xix. 17). Make haste to believe in Christ. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. vi. 2). Everlasting interests hinge upon this present moment. Ask God at once to give you grace to lay hold upon the Hope set before you in the Gospel (Heb. vi. 18).

Do not let the cares of life hinder you. A certain man was entrusted with the custody of a prisoner. He neglected his trust. His excuse was, "While I was busy here and there, he was gone" (I Kings xx. 40). Was that a valid excuse? And will your excuse be any more valid, if you lose your soul through the absorbing influence of earthly care, and if you assign that care as the cause? Oh, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteouness," (Matt. vi. 33). "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. viii. 22).

Do not fritter away your religious impressions by attention to theological controversy. To you, now that you are in a state of anxiety about your soul, the vexed questions of the day, though in themselves not unimportant, are of little moment. God has a controversy with you, and your business is to settle that (Mic. vi. 2). You may easily lose your serious feeling in an argument about serious things.

Listen to Him who says, "Come, now, let us reason together" (Isaiah i. 18). That, and that alone, is the reasoning which will now do you good.

Study the Word of God. It is the source of your spiritual growth (1 Peter ii. 2). At present chiefly read the Gospels which reveal Jesus to you, the Epistles which unfold to you the whole counsel of God, and the Psalms, which you will find, as all believers have found, not only a precious and instructive record of spiritual experience, but also a mirror in which you will often see your own image reflected. Read thoughtfully, inwardly digesting. Read prayerfully, for without the teaching of the Spirit, even God's Word will be a sealed book. Read regularly, regarding it as your daily food. Read humbly, not expecting to comprehend at first all you read, but waiting for difficulties to be cleared up, and things hard to be understood to be explained when and how the Great Teacher pleases (Heb. v. 11., 2 Peter iii. 16). And read with an earnest resolution that so far as you gather your Lord's will from His word, you will do it heartily (Neh. ii. 12, Ps. cxix. 112, Jer. xlii. 3, Col. iii. 17-23).

If you are privileged with an evangelical ministry, thankfully avail yourself of it as an appointed means of grace. Pray that the word preached may profit you, by being mixed with faith in your heart (Heb. iv. 2). Pray for the "hearing ear, the wise and understanding heart" (I Kings iii. 12, Isaiah l. 4). Some people affect to decry preaching in the present day, but the great commission which Christ gave his Apostles was to preach the Gospel, and the

terms of that commission show that it was to be permanent (Matt. xxviii. 19-20, Mark xvi. 15). The question for you is, not as to the learning, talents, eloquence of the preacher, but as to his being the bearer of a message from God to you. Is he an ambassador from Christ (2 Cor. v. 20), then listen to him as such.

Ask your clergyman to give you his advice. If he is a faithful minister of Christ, he can give you much instruction. "One half-hour's conversation with a skilful physician of souls," says a well-known writer, "will often do more to assist you in the first stage of your religious history than the reading of many books, and the hearing of many sermons."

Social prayer will be a help. If you can attend meetings for prayer, you will find them draw out your sympathies to the Lord's people, while the wants you hear them express in prayer will show you that your new religious feelings are not strange things which no one else has felt. There are promises to united prayer (Matthew xviii. 19; John xiv. 13).

The conversation of Christian friends may also aid you. Some Aquila and Priscilla may take you by the hand, as they took Apollos of old, and teach you the way of the Lord (Acts xviii. 26), if you tell them something about your present views and feelings. I do not, of course, mean that you are to talk about yourself to every Christian you meet, but wisely and prudently to make choice of one or two pious friends who may be entrusted with your confidence, and with whom you may speak freely concerning those things in which you have so deep

and common an interest. In ancient times they who feared the Lord spoke often one to another (Mal. iii. 16).

Do not be ashamed of being thought an anxious inquirer after truth. Do not assign other reasons than the true one for the apparent gloom which your friends notice. It is surely reasonable that you should be concerned about interests of such high importance. You are anxious to secure eternal life; it is quite natural that that anxiety should show itself in your looks and words.

But, indeed, what the world thinks about you just now matters little. Let it wonder, and laugh, and sneer. Heed not its clamour. Stay not for its entreaties. Run, without looking behind you, to the only Refuge—even to Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Lay hold of Him as your hope for eternity. Throw the arms of your faith around Him, and say with Jacob, at Penuel, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me."

"Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts!
Thou fount of life, Thou light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts,
I turn unfilled to Thee again.

"O Jesus, ever with me stay!

Make all my moments calm and bright:

Chase the dark night of sin away;

Shed o'er my soul thy holy light."



## CHAPTER VI.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

A ND now that you have read through the previous chapters of this book, I will venture to suppose the present state of your mind to be somewhat as follows:—

"I am, I believe, really in earnest about my soul's welfare. I perceive and feel my guilt as a sinner, and, realising my own helplessness, I will cast myself upon the finished work of Jesus as my sole dependance for life and peace. I will believe in Him. And I will devote myself to His service. He shall have me—unworthy as the offering is—in a full and loving surrender. By His grace assisting me I am resolved to live a Christian life."

But what is it to be a Christian?

This is an important question. Vague and uncertain views of Christian discipleship must be especially guarded against.

I want you to be a Christian; yet I would not take advantage of your present state of awakened feeling, so as to get you to pledge yourself to the vows of a life-long consecration without fully considering what they involve. I would not urge you to a hasty and unreflective rush into the pathway of peace; I desire to show you that pathway, and to explain to you what walking in it means; saying to

you, "This is the way," before I add the command, "Walk ye in it" (Isa. xxx. 21).

To be a Christian, then, is to be a follower of Christ. The word Christ-ian implies this. you are aware that the name of any great leader of a party in politics, science, or religion is often, in a similar way, made into an appellative, which characterises those who belong to his party. To call a member of that party by such a name indicates three things: that he thinks with his leader on all distinctive points, that he looks to him for guidance, and that he openly manifests anxiety his interests by placing himself publicly on his side. CHRIST is the leader of a great party—great indeed, for no man can number it (Rev. vii. 9)—and the question is now being asked throughout the world, "Who is on the Lord's side? who?" Those who are for Him are known by his name, and that name implies the three characteristics which I have just enumerated.

r. A real Christian is one who thinks alike with Christ on distinctive points. Now it is a fact that our Saviour held very decided opinions about men and things, and stated them in the plainest and most positive manner. And although these opinions often were in direct opposition to what people around Him thought, yet He, nevertheless, announced them without hesitation or reserve. He spoke boldly (John vii. 26), and with authority (Matt. vii. 29). Some persons found his opinions so uncompromising, and even exacting, that they were offended, and withdrew themselves from the ranks of his disciples, thus making it evident that

they were not *Christians*, that is, not of his way of thinking (John vi. 60-66). Jesus regarded them with sorrow, but did not, on account of their defection, make his teaching less plain and pointed (John viii. 14-32).

His disciples resembled Him in this. They believed that their Divine Master had the words of eternal life (John vi. 68); and they identified themselves so closely with his opinions as to be able to say "We have the mind of Christ" (I Cor. ii. 16). The Holy Spirit constantly brought to their remembrance what Christ had said, and thus led them into all truth (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13; Eph. iv. 21). They, therefore, avowed on all occasions their agreement with Christ's opinions, and "after the way which some called heresy so worshipped they the God of their fathers" (Acts xxiv. 14).

And you, if you are a true follower of Christ, share in this identity of sentiment.

How shall you know that you do?

Very easily: by comparing your opinions on any plainly important and distinguishing point with what you know to be Christ's. Take, for example, his Sermon on the Mount, and see whether you can go with Him in the opinions He there states (Matt. v., vi., vii.).

2. A Christian is one who looks to Christ for guidance, and refers everything to His authority.

We are all liable to make serious mistakes in life, because the world is full of pitfalls for unwary travellers, its paths fork out in various directions and bewilder us as to our proper course, and its mists often wrap themselves round us in a very perplexing way. We need light to enable us to see, wisdom to enable us to choose, and skill to enable us to walk securely. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, and none but a fool would trust the dictates of his own heart (Prov. xxviii. 26). We may, indeed, reach the end of our journey, even though we have frequently stumbled on the way, but it is neither pleasant nor safe to fall. It is, therefore, desirable that we should be rightly guided.

And if this is desirable—as I am sure it is—for the most experienced disciple of the Saviour, it must be so especially for you. You are young and inexperienced. Snares lie thickly around you. The world is not what it seems. There are apples of Sodom, which you may imagine to be desirable fruit. You will think tinsel is gold because it glitters. An angel of light may not appear to be a dangerous companion (2 Cor. xi. 14).

In addition to this, you may be so circumstanced as not to have one intelligent Christian friend. It may be an orphan's eye which now glances over these pages. If so, let me say how sincerely I join with you in deploring the loss of those to whom you might have looked as guides of your youth. A father's wise counsel, a mother's tender and watchful love—what a loss are these to one so young as you, so inexperienced, so timid! You feel desolate, just as if you were in a little boat alone, drifting along an unknown sea, without compass or rudder. And yet, my dear friend, not alone, if you can lift the eye of faith to Jesus, and

can pray the prayer of faith, "Lord, be Thou the guide of my youth" (Jer. iii. 4).

Or, you are away from home, a girl at school, a youth in a house of business, a young governess in a worldly family, a student at college: You are You find politeness, but not among strangers. sympathy. No man careth for your soul. pity you if your head aches, but they know of no anodyne if your heart aches. In fact you would not think of opening your inner self to their cold in-You may walk the streets of a great spection. metropolis, and be jostled by its crowds, and yet feel yourself alone—an insignificant, unregarded waif on the great stream of life. No one will care where you are drifted, no one utter a sigh if you are early stranded!

Perhaps you are the only serious member of your family or social circle, so that you cannot ask religious help from any one you know. You could discuss with them the fashion of a dress, the last new novel, the details of a picnic, the arrangements for a bazaar, but not the things which make for your everlasting peace. To speak to them of "the things touching the King," would be to converse in an unknown language. They could tell you how to get on in life, but they could not teach you how to "order your conversation aright so that you might see the salvation of God" (Ps. l. 23). You are with them, but not of them, and you often sigh as you think how useless they all are as "helpers of your joy" (2 Cor. i. 24).

I may suppose you placed in even a more difficult position still. You are then surrounded by professed disciples of Christ, who are earnest in their discipleship; but you have reason to fear that they are unsound in their views of divine truth. The winds of doctrine are just now blowing with unusual fury, and you are in danger of being tossed to and fro (Eph. iv. 14). You may be placed among those who have low views of the inspiration of God's word, and of those great truths which have long been distinctive features of the Church's belief; or, among those who are teaching a false gospel, are putting the Church in the place of Christ, and are sacramentalists, but not Christians. These persons cannot be taken safely as your guides, for concerning the faith they have themselves erred (1 Tim. vi. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 18). Yet their uprightness, their earnestness, their self-denial may make it difficult for you to refuse to follow where they lead. Can they be wrong who seem so completely given up to earnest efforts to lead a godly life?

Believe me, earnestness is not sufficient as a guide. Apollos was an earnest champion of the Cross, but he knew the way of the Lord imperfectly: it would have been unwise to take him as a guide (Acts xviii. 25). Saul of Tarsus was a remarkably earnest man, exemplary in his piety, studious in the law, uncompromising in his zeal, bringing to God's service the full vigour of his unblemished youth (Phil. iii. 6); yet all this did not make him a Christian, nor qualify him as a counsellor. It was only when he closely followed his Master's steps that he had a right to say, "Walk so as ye have us for an example" (Phil. iii. 17). We are to follow them who, through faith and patience, inherit the

promises (Heb. vi. 12), but only so far as they follow Christ. He is your infallible guide, your perfect example, your ever ready adviser. "Whatever He saith unto you, do it" (John ii. 5).

At this very moment it may be you are unusually perplexed as to your path of duty. Young people, not having gained experience of life, are, more than older persons, at a loss to know what to do in the emergencies which almost daily present themselves. "What ought I to do?" may be the question which you are now asking. How satisfactory it is that your Lord's will is your unerring guide, and that you are privileged to know that will (John vii. 17). Cheerfully commit your way unto Him, and He will bring it to pass (Ps. xxxvii. 5). Follow his leading: thus you will show you are a Christian.

But how can you ascertain the will of Christ? By examining the record which contains it. This is the Bible, for it is the "Word of Christ" (Col. iii. That blessed volume is a light for your path, a rule for your conduct, an oracle for your questionings, a touchstone for your piety. It narrates your Saviour's history, and every act in that history is both doctrine and precept. If you cannot imitate Christ in the actual details of his earthly life, you can derive from it principles, which may be successfully applied in your own daily life, even in its smallest particulars. How would Christ have me act? may often be answered by another question: How would Christ have acted if He had been in my place? If you are honestly and perseveringly striving to follow his guidance, you shall not be

left ignorant what that guidance requires from you (Hosea vi. 3).

And, lest you should be mistaken in your interpretation of your Saviour's will, while you strive to gather it by a careful study of his Word, He has given his Holy Spirit to aid your investigation. This is his office, to make "the things of Christ" plain to your judgment and dear to your heart (John xiv. 26; xvi. 15; Phil. ii. 10-13). Jesus also speaks to you by messengers who bring his Word to you (Acts ix. 6-17). You have also the privilege of the throne of grace, and the promise of answers to prayer (Phil. iii. 15, iv. 6; Heb. iv. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 12; Rev. viii. 3).

And if thus you look in implicit faith to the Lord Jesus as your Counsellor, and refer everything to his unquestioned authority, the evidence that you are so doing is a good and sufficient evidence that you really are a Christian.

3. A Christian is one who feels and practically manifests anxiety for the promotion of Christ's interests. If Christ has formed a scheme for the welfare of the world in which you live, you, if a *Christian*, are desirous that that scheme should be carried out.

And you know that Christ has such a scheme, and that his heart is set upon its accomplishment, even the redemption of fallen man, the overcoming of Satan's power, and the setting up of a kingdom of righteousness. Now a Christian is one whose sympathies will be drawn out in a lively way as he thinks of the great things yet to be done for the securing of his Saviour's triumphs, and as he reads

the prophecies which unfold the glories of that Saviour's reign, his heart will glow with the anticipation of that blessed time—the time of universal holiness, peace, love, and joy—and his lips will often utter the prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

And he will show as well as feel this sympathy. He will not think it a strange thing that people should see that he wants Christ to be known and loved.

Or, if he does see that they wonder at his earnestness, he will not be less in earnest; he will only sigh and think, "Ah, they little know what a dear friend I have found in Jesus: I must tell them how precious He is to them that believe."

One morning, during the time of a severely contested election for members of Parliament, a stranger called at my house. I had never seen him before, but as he was very anxious for an interview, I agreed to see him. His object, he said, in calling, was to beg for my votes for the candidate whose interests he had espoused, and he thought that the unusual importance of the contest rendered it unnecessary to apologise for, as a stranger, intruding upon me. He seemed to regard it as a matter of course that he might come and talk to me about the strong claims which his friend had upon my vote and interest. He spoke to me very earnestly, and did his best to convince that my path of duty was to vote as he was intending to vote. Now, if in worldly matters people regard themselves free to show the strong personal interest which they feel, if they consider it not improper to try to persuade other people

to think as they think, is it not still more reasonable that the friends of Christ should show how dear his interests are to them, and should seek to persuade those who are strangers to Him how pressing are his claims to their love and service? It ought not to be thought a singular thing that you are anxious to get all around you to consecrate their influence to His glory. No, it is just what people ought to expect a *Christian* to do—to win souls for Christ.

And in so doing you must openly place yourself on the side of Christ. This follows plainly enough from my preceding remarks. If you love Jesus and want to promote his glory, you will be ready to take your stand among his disciples, and let all the world see you belong to Him. If the stranger who canvassed me so zealously for my votes had gone to the polling-booth on the day of the election and voted for some other candidate, what should I have thought of his consistency? I should have said he had no sincere regard for his friend. And if you profess love to Christ, and try to make Him known to others—as, for example, in Sundavschool teaching, tract distributing, or district visiting-and yet, when some opportunity occurs of showing yourself for or against Him, you act as if He were not your friend, what must be thought of you? Of what use is it to talk for Him and vote against Him?

But you may say, When do I do so?

Here is one example. When you are present during conversation which you feel to be dishonouring to Christ and his Gospel, and you do nothing to check it. If anything were said reflecting on the character of a beloved earthly friend, I think you would at once take his part. If you did not, he would afterwards say to you, "Why did you not stand up for me?" And so you ought to stand up for Christ.

But you, perhaps, object—"I am young and timid; I could not speak, though I know I ought to."

Very likely. But you know the proverb, "Actions speak louder than words." A grave look may be a reproof. A marked withdrawal from the company may indicate your disapproval of their talk.

George the Fourth, when Prince Regent, was one day, at dinner, indulging in very improper conversation. A clergyman, who was present, felt pained, but thought it would not be right to rebuke his prince in words, yet he wished to show himself on the side of Christ; so he quietly rose from the table, gravely bowed to the Prince, and left the room. Why he did so was plain enough both to the Prince and his guests; but nothing was said about it. Some time afterwards, when a bishopric was vacant, the Prince said, "Give it to Mr. S-; he is the most honest man I know." And so the clergyman's bold avowal of his discipleship was recognised and honoured. Believe me, dear reader, a timid, time-serving policy will only lead the world to despise you.

Think of Peter. What a fine opportunity of avowing his discipleship he lost when he went and stood by the fire, and pretended to be busy warming himself (Mark xiv. 54). I am not now

referring to his denial of his discipleship, but to his refraining from its acknowledgment. At that time he said nothing; he only placed himself, as by accident, among the high priest's servants, and seemed inattentive to what was passing near him. He simply did not wish to be known. At that moment he intended nothing more than not to show his colours. And he might have argued—"This is only prudence; I can do no good to my Master by appearing to be one of his followers; I am not injuring Him by keeping here quietly by the fire."

Wherein lay the harm?

First. The Saviour's cause lost the influence of Peter's avowed attachment.

Secondly. The Saviour's enemies gained by Peter's seeming union with them.

Thirdly. The coward spirit grew stronger within his breast by his yielding to its first impulses, till he who at first only wished to keep himself neutral, was heard to curse and deny his Lord.

Do not be like Peter. Do not shrink from giving your testimony to Christ. Do not say, My silence cannot be of importance. I do not ask you to say much, only to go close to Jesus, in the judgment-hall, and stand meekly by Him, so that friends and foes may see that you are one of his disciples.

Sometimes, however, it may be needful to speak as well as act.

Here is an incident which exhibits true Christian courage under very trying circumstances.

A young man, John Ouincy Adams by name, was American Ambassador to the Netherlands. Now the ambassadors of the different nations at that court were in the habit of meeting together for the purpose of social enjoyment, and mirth and amusements made the scene a gay one. Adams was, of course, invited to these festive gatherings. Once they adjourned to a Sunday evening. The time came, the ambassadors assembled, but the American was missing. As he was an agreeable companion, his absence occasioned disappointment. However, it was supposed that some unavoidable duty had prevented his joining their gay circle. They adjourned again to the next Sunday evening. Still Adams did not attend. Their next assembly was on a week-day, and then the American Ambassador was present. crowded round him with a hearty welcome, and with eager questions as to his absence. Imagine that scene. The gilded banqueting room, the music, the glitter of uniforms, the sparkling conversation, the laughing looks, as the merry but stately representatives of proud European Courts asked the young ambassador from the United States why he had been away so long. What was his reply? Instead of making an apology, or assigning a fictitious reason, he spoke frankly thus:---

"My principles will not allow me to employ any part of the Sabbath in this way. I was born in a country settled by Puritans, of Puritan parents, who believed in the Bible, and regarded the Sabbath as a sacred institution. I have witnessed the good influence of its religious observance in the greater intelligence, the pure morals, the energy, enterprise, and orderly habits of my countrymen. As a servant of God and a friend of my country, therefore, I cannot pervert the day—in whatever part of the world I may be, or by whatever customs surrounded."

There was silence. Serious looks for a moment marked every countenance. They were awed by this quiet Christian heroism. By immediate and general consent they resolved to meet no more on Sunday evenings. Nor did they.

And now that I have shown you what it is to be a Christian, let me ask you, Are you resolved to be one? Are you agreed in opinions with Christ? Do you always mean to watch for the intimations of His will, and to refer your whole life to the control of His authority? Will you regard the advancement of His kingdom as your dearest aim? And are you ready, in the strength of a true affection, to place yourself on the Lord's side, and to show that you are not ashamed of his Cross? If so, then you are a Christian.

Mark, I do not mean that you must be perfect in this. There may be a sincere and loving conformity to Christ in mind, heart, and conduct, with much imperfection, many inconsistencies, frequent failures. The blind man mentioned in John ix. 24–33 was only a partially enlightened man, but he placed himself on Christ's side, and was cast out because he was a Christian. You will have much to learn before your Christian character is a very bright reflection of its Great

Exemplar. Yet, if not very bright, it may be a true reflection, and if something of Jesus can be seen in you, then you may venture to think you are a real Christian.

And if you would go on unto perfection, seek the Holy Spirit's aid. He will enable you so to behold the glory of your Lord that you shall be gradually changed to the same image (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Now, in what I have stated, I have not forgotten a peculiarity of your present religious position. You are already-independently of your own choice—professedly a Christian. You have been openly pledged to Christ's party. When you were too young either to assent or refuse, your name was enrolled in the ranks of the Saviour's followers, and t was determined, in every possible way, to train you so that you might grow up in sympathy with Him, and thus, when old enough to choose for yourself, be induced to give in your own voluntary adhesion to his cause. It seemed likely that, if from the earliest dawn of reason you were taught to regard yourself as belonging to Christ, you would be so influenced by the idea of it, as not to wish to annul the engagements made in your name, but rather to ratify and confirm them, by your own hearty self-surrender.

In this sense it is correct to say that your Baptism made you a Christian; that is, it placed you among His followers, who are called Christians, and required that you should be brought up as one. It grafted you into His Church.

And so your Baptism has been a great privilege

to you. If pious hands brought you to the Font, and if pious prayers rose heavenwards over your early consecration, may we not believe that you, as a child of prayer, have profited by that dedication? You are not a heathen, but have been for years in outward membership with Christ's Church, and favoured with much sweet Christian privilege.

Of course you are now free to choose whether that identifying of you with Christ's followers shall be acknowledged or repudiated. You are not forced to be a Christian because your friends enrolled you as one. You are now at liberty to say, "I have thought carefully over the obligations of the Christian discipleship; I do not like them, and I have no wish to try to fulfil them; I decide, therefore, not to be a Christian." This would be honest, though sad. The pious efforts of your friends would then be a failure.

Or, you may say, "After much thought and prayer, I am convinced that Christ has claims on my love and service that I cannot and would not deny. All that my friends have promised in my name is not more than Jesus has a right to ask from me; not more, indeed, than I wish to agree to. I see that they bind me to His service as long as I live, and my heart rejoices in the sense of this obligation. I confirm the engagement and make it my own—I AM A CHRISTIAN."

I rejoice in believing that this is the conclusion you have come to. I hail you as, by your own act and deed, a brother or a sister in Christ. May the Spirit of His Grace hallow and strengthen your self-consecration!

But how shall this act be recorded?

Now you may write out the words in which I have just announced your resolve, and then date and sign the paper, and lock it up in your desk.

But that would be only a private record. It is needful, if you would rightly glorify Christ, that the record should also be public. You must make a public avowal of your faith in Christ. In what way shall it be done?

You need not try to devise some way of doing it, for there is an appointed way, time, and place, so that, in accordance with a very ancient custom of the Church of Christ, you may publicly join yourself to the Lord's people. This is what is commonly known as a Confirmation. Popularly, the Bishop is said to confirm, but really it is your own confirming, for you "renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons."

It is quite right this should be done "openly, before the church," for then you are known to be a disciple of Christ; you will feel under a pledge, and your membership will strengthen the party to which you are united—one more gained for Christ, one more lost to the world!

These remarks are suitable to you whether you are already confirmed or not; for your confirmation, alas! may have been an empty form, a meaningless ceremony to you. The persuasion of friends, the influence of custom, nay, even a blind sense of duty, may have drawn you to the confirmation when you had no right to be there.

If so, then pray earnestly that grace may now be given you to enable you to make a reality of what was a thoughtless rite; and that you may "faithfully observe such things as you, by your own confession, then assented unto."

If not already confirmed, avail yourself of the first opportunity of "witnessing a good confession before many witnesses," and of thus making public the decision to which your heart has assented. The Macedonian Christians "first gave themselves to the Lord," and then to His Church (2 Cor. viii. 5).

- "In life's morning bright and fair, When thy path is free from care, Thou hast come at Christ's sweet call, Yielding Him thine heart, thine all!
- "He accepts thy gift, and now Stamps his peace upon thy brow; Promises thy steps to guide: With thee ever will abide.
- "Fearlessly his name confess:
  Close and closer to Him press;
  Work for Him with all thy might;
  Wanderers to his fold invite.
- "Meekly trusting in his grace,
  Day by day his footsteps trace:
  Till He summons thee in love
  To his glorious home above!"



# CHAPTER VII.

#### THE LIFE OF LIBERTY.

THE ancient Pharisees had religious laws which regulated the most trifling things. They tithed the "mint, anise and cummin;" they had rules for the "washing of cups and platters," for the ceremonial cleansings of the hands, and for the breadth of the phylacteries. Their traditions were numerous, complex, and burdensome. Religion became with them à mere mechanism. Their "straitest sect" was only a company of automatons.

But they have their imitators now. There are those who would reduce religion to a round of ceremonies, who would give you a rule for everything you do, who would encourage you to ask them, "May I do this?" "May I do that?"

And as you are inexperienced, and often at a loss to judge, it may seem a good thing if you could always be told what to do. If wiser persons than you would kindly advise you by saying, "Don't do this, it is wrong," or, "Do this, because it is right," it would be helpful to you. Young people have often said to me, "I won't do it if you think it is wrong."

"If you think it is wrong." Ah, there is the error. My thinking it wrong, does not, cannot

prove it to be wrong. I am not infallible. My decision may be correct, or it may be mistaken. Barnabas, a good and holy man, was lead astray for awhile, through undue deference for the opinion of an eminent apostle (Gal. ii. 13). There are more popes than the one at Rome; some who wish to be popes, and others who are made so against their will by the implicit faith which persons place in their teaching. Why were the Bereans distinguished for their nobility of character? Because they did not believe an apostle simply on the ground of his being an apostle, but tested his teaching by Scripture proofs (Acts xvii. 11).

You are not to be conceited and arrogant, as if you needed no instruction. You are not to reject the friendly offer of Aquila and Priscilla to teach you the way of the Lord more perfectly, but you are to follow their teaching Bible in hand, and to ask them to "open and allege" from the Scriptures the things concerning Christ (Acts xvii. 2, 3).

Two evils will result from your making any one the director of your Christian life.

First, you will remain a feeble, useless Christian, like a child who is always carried, like a man who always uses crutches. You will be unable to walk to run, to work, to fight.

Secondly, the actings of your spiritual life being only in conformity to rules given you, you will become an artificial and stunted creature, somewhat resembling the yew-trees you may have seen, cut, and trimmed, and tortured into fantastic shapes; caricatures, not realities; and sad distortions of a living tree. I want you to be a fair

and fruitful tree, obeying the instincts of your spiritual growth, and developing naturally under God's sunshine and showers, so as to make it manifest that you are of the Lord's right hand planting.

But, besides the error of a reliance on the judgment of a fellow-creature, there is in connection therewith another error—that of failing to rise to the highest motive of conduct. Among the numerous letters which come to me asking counsel, I notice a tendency on the part of the writers to make what they do a mere question of right and wrong. "May I go to a ball?" "Is it wrong to visit a theatre?" "Is card-playing wrong?" "Ought I to refuse to learn dancing?" "Is it wrong to go to a concert, an oratorio, a large mixed party?" Now I do not like this way of putting it. We are not under the law, but under grace (Rom. vi. 14), and religion is a life of love, not a life of rule.

Of course with very little children you have to give constant and minute rules. "Baby must not do that," suits the nursery regime. But you are not to transplant this regime to your spiritual life. In malice you are to be children, but in understanding men, and the routine which is needful for a child would be intolerable bondage to a man.

Conscientiousness is right, yet a heathen might be conscientious. Such was Balak, King of Moab, when he desired to know what God required of him (Mic. vi. 6). Such was Saul when he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" (Acts ix. 1). More than this is needful as a *Christian* motive.

Children brought up under pious influences are likely to be conscientious. And they may easily mistake this for true piety, especially if it be strongly in exercise. This is not religion, but we may call it "religiousness." Adelaide Newton was a very "religious" girl long before she found the secret of true peace. Her governess said it was exceedingly pleasant to be with her at the season of spiritual instruction. "She always appeared to enjoy those opportunities, and on one occasion I remember she said, 'Thank you, I shall now go to sleep on the Rock of Ages." At one time she was constantly reading Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," James's "Anxious Inquirer," &c., and, with three others, used to spend many hours in devotional reading and prayer. Yet she was not happy. "It is the constant life," she says, "of watchfulness and self-denial required of the Christian which fills me with despair."—" There is something within which keeps me from enjoying perfect peace. I wish more and more every day to see some clergyman, who would tell me what he thought of me."-" I am the victim of the most distressing and painful conflict. Sometimes I feel ready to give myself up almost to despair, while at other times I seem to enjoy religion." This is the language of one thoroughly in earnest, deeply anxious to be right, who has her conscience intensely wakeful, and who goes on for six or seven years striving to be good and happy. Yet her testimony is, "I had no real enjoyment in anything."—" I have been very much depressed in spirits, and at times quite miserable."

Wherein was she wrong? In not seeing that the Christian life is a life of liberty, its service one of "perfect freedom;" in trying to obey God's commandments as a duty; and regarding success in this as the source of her peace. Her conscience had not yet received its true "sprinkling;" her heart was not yet really given to Christ. She lacked the motive—love to Jesus.

But she was not left in this miserable state. Her eyes were opened to see the Christian life as one of grace and privilege. She found rest in Christ, not in duty. She discovered the true impulse to duty in the realised joy of the Saviour's presence. "It is impossible," she writes, "to describe what a sight of Christ is. One man cannot tell another. Every one must see for himself. It is perfectly irresistible. And there is something transforming in the very act of beholding Jesus. It is the soul's highest joy."

Listen, also, to the confession of Brainerd:—
"The more I did in duty, the more hard I thought
it would be for God to cast me off. But now I
see that my duties laid not the least obligation
upon God to bestow his grace upon me. I see,
evidently, that the whole was nothing but will
worship."

I may advert also to the life of John Wesley at Oxford, as illustrating my statements about conscientiousness. No one could be more in earnest than he was in religion. He strove to be holy in heart as well as regular in outward conduct. After reading Bishop Taylor on "Purity of Intention," he began "to alter the whole form of his conver-

sation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. He communicated every week. He watched against all sin, whether in word or deed, and sought and prayed for inward holiness, but still with a painful consciousness that he found not that which he so earnestly sought."

And yet there was much that seemed praiseworthy. The two brothers were leading a life of integrity, self-denial, and zeal for others; they were cheerfully bearing the scorn and ridicule which their resolution to serve God had brought on them. Their father, after a visit to them, could speak of "the shining piety of his two sons." John Wesley shall tell you in his own words how fervent was his religious feeling:—

"I was convinced more than ever of the exceeding height and breadth and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying Him as I had never done before. And by my continued endeavour to keep his whole law, inward and outward, to the best of my power, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of Him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation."

Yet, strive as he might, and as he did, with all the concentration and energy of his fine natural spirit, he failed, and was thrown "into distress and perplexity, so that he seemed at a loss which way to proceed to obtain the happiness and security he wanted."

He needed some one to counsel him to lay

down the burden of his wounded and anxious spirit, in self-despair as to his own efforts, at the foot of the Cross. His was the "spirit of bondage unto fear," not the "spirit of adoption" (Rom. viii. 15). He put mortification, retirement, and contempt of the world in the place of that Saviour's finished work, the influence of which, when realised by faith, removes guilt from the conscience, cheers by the sense of acceptance, renews the heart after God's image, and furnishes impulses to duty of a higher order and a purer motive.

Happily this good man was brought into contact with Peter Böhler, the Moravian, and from him he learnt the true way of evangelical obedience. "He amazed me," Wesley says, "he amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith, the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by the law and the testimony, being confident that God would hereby show me whether this doctrine was of God."

The result was not long doubtful. For a time he was unable fully to rejoice, but there came a memorable day which he thus describes:—

"I think it was about five this morning that I opened my Testament on these words, 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises' (2 Pet. i. 4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on these words, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's; the anthem was 'Out of the deep' (Ps. cxxx. 1). In the evening

I went, very unwillingly, to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, when he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ—Christ alone—for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins—even mine—and saved me from the 'law of sin and death.' . . . I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart."

And so, after nine years of earnest but mistaken religious strivings, John Wesley found out the secret of true religion and peace, and the secret of that successful service which he afterwards so wonderfully rendered to Christ and His Church.

So you see, my dear friend, that it is love to Christ, not a sense of duty, which is to prompt you. In a certain sense, you have nothing to do with things being right and wrong; the law has no dominion overyou; you are dead to it, through faith in Christ (Rom. vii. 6). You have, I trust, yielded yourself to Christ, realising what He has done for you, and what He is to you. Christ, therefore, is your standard, not the law; a desire to please Him should be your incentive, not merely a wish, however sincere, to do what is right.

This is a pleasanter motive than conscientiousness could be. It is sweeter to do what will give pleasure to those we love than to perform a task which has been sternly imposed on us. Fear hath torment.

And it is a more powerful motive. Love is stronger than fear. "The love of Christ constaineth us"—literally "urges us on irresistibly."

"I cannot help thinking," writes a young disciple to a friend at school, "that if you are much occupied with thoughts of heaven, of holiness, of the meek and holy Jesus, and how He lived and walked on earth, you will feel a secret shrinking from worldly society, which will make balls, &c., very painful to you. God has left no positive commands upon things of this sort, for He knows that where the heart is given to Him, the life will assuredly be given also. And the motive to Gospel obedience is not so much duty as love. The child that loves its parents devotedly, or its friends, does what will please them at any cost."

"I wish that we Christians," says Dr. Cumming, "looked less at religion as a bundle of hard duties, and more as a revelation of transcendent and glorious privileges. In nothing do we more grieve and vex the Spirit of God than in this, that what He sets forth as a marvellous privilege we think of as a hard and difficult duty."

"But," it may be said, "God has given us many commands in his Word; it must be right to obey them; it must be a duty to do so."

Of course it is; but my remarks do not refer to duties themselves, but to the motives which lead to their performance. A slight illustration will show you what I mean.

A father, contemplating a lengthened absence from home, resolves to leave his eldest son Thomas in charge of house, lands, and business. There

will be so much which requires constant and close attention, and some details which are complicated, that the father has drawn up full instructions for his son's guidance. These he leaves with him at Thomas feels the weight of his rehis departure. sponsibility, but resolves to discharge it faithfully. Between father and son there is a strong bond of affection. As soon as the father has left, his son thinks the best thing he can do is first to make himself thoroughly familiar with his book of instructions. He finds them full and clear as to the principles on which he is to act, and many important cases which are likely to occur are here provided for. His great wish is to please his father, and every day he thinks, How can I act so that if my father were here he would smile and say, Well done?

Suppose you go to him, with some inviting speculation, assuring him that, if he joins, it will turn out a great success. He replies, "Before I can entertain your offer I must see what my father says about such things." He consults his directions; shakes his head, and tells you that he is quite sure his father would not approve of it.

You still attempt to persuade him, saying, It would not be wrong to do it. His prompt answer is, "Right or wrong, I am sure my father would not be pleased, and therefore I must say no."

<sup>&</sup>quot;How do you know he would not approve?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;Here are his directions."

<sup>&</sup>quot;But must you always be guided by them?"

<sup>&</sup>quot;It is not a question of must, I want to be."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Why?"

- "Because I love him."
- "But need you mind so much about his wishes, just now? See what a tempting offer I make you."
- "If you have brought the diamond-fields in your pockets it will make no difference; I can only do what I think will please my father."
  - "What a slave you are then!"
- "Oh, no, no, not a slave, but a son, and my affection makes me wish to do the smallest thing in my father's own way, just as I find he has written it down here," and he lays his hand fondly on the leaves, which look as if they had been often perused.

In that son's obedience there is nothing irksome, nothing reluctant. Nor does he fail to do what is right because he is not forced to do it. He does not say, "Because it is only my father's directions, and I know he will not compel me to carry them out, therefore I shall slight them as much as I please." No, he reasons in just the contrary way: "Because it is my loving father who gives me these directions, and because I have such a strong regard for him, therefore I shall do what will please him, even in the smallest matter. I should like him to see, when he returns, how much I love him."

But now imagine a very different scene. The directions are not those of a father to his son, but those of the frowning governor of a convict prison to the criminals who are working there in chains. He says that in his absence they are to carry out his instructions to the very letter, on pain of severe punishment at his return.

See how the thing will work in his absence.

There will be little inclination to study the directions, but some attention will be compelled by dread of future anger. It will be a disagreeable study, every direction awakening a mutinous spirit, only controlled by fear. The compliance will be given grudgingly; the duties, if discharged, performed evasively. Many little directions will be neglected, in the hope that they are too small to be likely to be noticed at the governor's return.

It will not be a joyful life, but one of grumbling, terrified submission. The men will want to disobey, and it will be only the thought of the crank, the whip, the heavier shackles, the starving diet, and the dark cell which will rouse them to an imperfect obedience. If some one could only tell them of a scheme to enable them to get free from that intolerable thraldom under which they are chafing, they would hail him as their benefactor, and gladly make their escape. But tell them there is no hope of that, and they will turn again to the grinding in their prison-house, knowing they cannot get free, and going through a slave's task, in a slave's spirit, hating their work because they hate the appointer of it.

These illustrations will, I hope, make my meaning sufficiently clear, and will show you that there is no antagonism between God's law and love to Him, but that Jesus has become the "end of the law" for us, and that our love is a true "fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

Obedience to Christ will often oblige us to run counter to the judgment of our friends. Now, young people are usually much too ready to assert

their own opinions. It is a very unattrafeature in our modern youth, this independent control, and even of counsel. A mere child say, "Well, I think so, and I mean to do so," young persons are heard parading their immigudgments as if they were grave, experienced ple. Still there are occasions when the modest and retiring spirit must differ from a around, and show the difference in acts (Ac 19, 20). Fidelity to the Saviour will require sometimes to say, humbly—oh, very humbly, I amyet decidedly, that your mind is made up, that you dare not hesitate as to the course you it right to pursue. Listen to an extract fre letter of Amelia Sieveking:—

"My dear brother, your opinion has very, great weight with me; but will you take it am I say that, in this matter, I could not concec absolutely decisive value to it? You see, wh have laid the matter before my God in prayer, have done in this case, when I have weighe the reasons, for and against, with calm mind, ir presence, and, as I have looked up to Hir inward clearness has been given me from al then I dare not allow myself to be decided mere human opinion any more.

"Is this clinging to my own opinion, prid obstinacy? Oh, my beloved friends, I feel enough how easily such impurities glide in, therefore my daily prayer to God is that He w make me humble." But to submit to the judg of others, where our inward conviction does n with it, I cannot regard as genuine humility;

regard it only as unfaithfulness to ourselves, unfaithfulness to the loving voice of God, which speaks audibly enough in every soul that will but watch for it.

"Oh, how terrible if it were not so, if we were driven to rely on man's judgment alone! What uncertainty, what wretched indecision would be the inevitable result! Where should we dare to take our stand firmly, and with a good courage?"

"Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out for me,
And the changes that will surely come,
I do not fear to see;
But I ask Thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

"There are briars besetting every path,
That call for patient care:
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer:
But a lowly heart that leans on Thee
Is happy everywhere.

"In the service which thy love appoints
There are no bonds for me;
For my secret heart is taught the truth,
That makes thy children free;
And a life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty."



## CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE glorious truths connected with the person and offices of the Holy Spirit are not, I fear, brought forward in due prominence in the sermons and books of the present day. Beyond incidental allusions, and the barest recognition of the believer's need of His help, how little we hear about Him!

Besides this, how vague is the realisation of Him, even when it is felt! From the use of the word "Spirit" has grown up a conception of Him as of an attribute, or influence, or disposition of mind, and the impersonal pronoun is often used when reference is made to Him. This I need not say is quite wrong, for you are fully aware that He is one of the Persons of the blessed Trinity, and as much an object of our realising faith and adoration as are the Father and the Son.

But you may, unconsciously to yourself, have fallen into too common an error in failing to regard Him in his personal claim to your love and obedience. It would help you to correct such an error, to search for Scripture texts which prove the Holy Spirit to have the name and attributes of God ascribed to Him, and which show Him topossess the characteristics of a personal agent.

do not give you a list of these texts, but they are very numerous. I would not have you without clear ideas about this. I want you to understand how all your hopes of perseverance in the path of the just must rest on the presence and operation within you of that blessed Spirit who was sent by Christ to his Church.

Nay, I want you to trace back your spiritual feelings and desires to the first thought about salvation of which you have retained a memory, and to see how closely the Holy Spirit has been connected with that moral process.

What first awakened a serious thought in your mind? Probably some sermon, for faith cometh by hearing (Rom. x. 17). You remember how that sermon impressed you. You did from that moment really begin to seek Christ. But there were other people present who were not impressed. Perhaps some who walked home with you from church that day showed by their comments, or their frivolous chatter, that their unconcern was not touched.

Yet why should it not be? The sermon was as fitted to arouse them as you. They were as likely to be aroused by it as you. What made the difference?

Not accident. It was the Holy Spirit's work. He used that sermon to awaken you to spiritual concern.

The Bible without the Spirit will not do it. Though it is the Word of God, yet till the Spirit "take of the things of Christ" therein, and show them unto us, the oracle will seem to have no

voice. "Until that Holy Spirit is pleased to bless what the Bible proclaims, and what the minister preaches, the preacher may pronounce his solemn addresses, the law may fulminate its thunders, the intellect may draw logically its conclusions; but conscience will sit still unstirred, while the deprayed, the exasperated passions rise and trample all under feet, as swine trample upon pearls that are carelessly and thoughtlessly cast before them."

It will be useful and interesting to consider the various offices of the Holy Spirit. They may be enumerated under seven heads. Seven was, among the Jews, the symbol of perfection, and it is applied to the Holy Spirit (Isa. xi. 2; Rev. v. 6). This, then, is a classification of the works of the Spirit which may guide you in their contemplation. Other works of the Spirit which I have not mentioned may still come under this arrangement.

1. It is a work of the Spirit to awaken the conscience. As the Spirit moved on the face of the waters at the creation, so does He come with the broodings of spiritual life to the dark chaos of the sinner's heart (John iii. 5). If your mind has been savingly enlightened, it is because you have received "the Spirit which is of God, that you might know the things which are freely given you of God" (1 Cor. ii. 12). If you have truly repented, it is because the spirit of grace and of supplications has been poured out upon you (Zech. xii. 10). If you are conscious of the impulses of a new life in your soul, "it is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John vi. 63). Your conviction "of sin, and o

righteousness, and of judgment" is owing to the coming of the Spirit (John xvi. 8).

- 2. The Spirit leads the awakened soul to Christ. He testifies of Christ (John xv. 26; xvi. 13), and shows the anxious inquirer after salvation how suitable, and sufficient, and free is the atonement which Jesus has made. Thus He draws, or induces him to come to Christ (I Cor. xii. 3; I John v. 6; Eph. ii. 18; Rev. xxii. 17).
- 3. The Spirit comforts the soul when it is brought to Christ (John vii. 38; xiv. 16; Acts iii. 19; ix. 31; xiii. 52; Rom. xiv. 17; xv. 13; I Thess. i. 6; Rev. i. 4).
- 4. The Spirit teaches the soul. He is the "Spirit of truth" (John xiv. 17; 1 Cor. ii. 4, 10; xii. 4; Eph. iii. 5; 1 John ii. 20).
- 5. The Spirit sanctifies the soul (Rom. viii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 11; Gal. v. 16, 17; Eph. v. 9; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Tit. iii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 2).
  - 6. The Spirit prays for the soul (Rom. viii. 26).
- 7. The Spirit seals, or assures the soul. Under the first operations of the Spirit the heart is softened, under the second the impression of the seal is made. The design of this is to distinguish, to denote property, to mark high esteem, to give security. It is a dangerous thing to touch sealed property. The characteristics of this sealing are, the assurance of our interest in Christ, the consciousness of the spirit of adoption, the realisation of future glory as an earnest and pledge (Rom. viii. 15, 16; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Eph. i. 13-18; iii. 14-19; iv. 30; Gal. v. 5).

If, then, you are now a believer in Jesus, and

can realise the privileges of adoption into the One Family, do not forget that you owe this blessedness to the work of the Holy Spirit in your soul. And may "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 13).

But now consider your duties towards this blessed Spirit.

Let Him have the constant acknowledgments of your gratitude and love.

Take heed that you do not grieve Him (Eph. iv. 30). You grieve Him when you resist his gentle stirrings in your heart (Isa. lxiii. 10; Acts vii. 51).

If your soul is His Temple, how anxious should vou be after holiness. He resides within you, as in an abode solemnly dedicated to His worship and service. Yours is to be a temple-life. such a life, then, harmonize with feelings of pride, worldliness, sensuality, ambition? Suppose you could remove from the exterior of a heathen temple all idolatrous signs, and could inscribe on its portals "Christian Church," while you left the interior to be filled with idol-images and pictures. and heathen altars and sacrifices; would it be a Christian Church? Yet this is a true picture of nominal Christians. Their external conduct has been brought into something of a resemblance to the Christian character; but within, what is to be seen there? Alas, they have set up their idols in their heart (Ezek. xiv. 3), and their hearts go after them (Ezek. xx. 16). Dread, then, the thought of such

hypocrisy, and earnestly pray that the very God of peace may sanctify you wholly, may make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you (1 Pet. i. 3; v. 10).

Live in habitual dependence on the Holy Spirit's aid. Have you not already learned the lesson of your own weakness? Young as you are in the Christian life, I think you must know what failure means. You have failed sometimes in your efforts to live a consistent life. Yet you had, as you thought, fully decided for Christ. Your intention of complete self-surrender was sincere. And you really have tried to be a disciple. Still you have failed—ah! more than once—in duty; have stumbled in the narrow path; have learned how little strength you possess.

It will be good for you to arrive at this knowledge. Because this realisation of your own weakness will lead you to desire and seek the aid of the Spirit.

And remember that aid is promised (Luke xi. 13).

If, then, you fail, it is not the Holy Spirit's fault, for He is both able and willing to strengthen you with "all might" (Eph. iii. 16), and can make "all grace abound unto you" (2 Cor. ix. 8).

Look for that Spirit's help in discerning things that differ, and in "trying the spirits" (I John iv. 1), for there are "lying spirits" abroad (2 Thess. ii. 9). Even an "old prophet" may pretend God speaks by him when God has not spoken (I Kings xiii. 18). "This I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in know-

ledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent" (Phil. i. 10).

Do not forget the sovereignty of the Spirit (John iii. 8). In this age of religious activity there is great danger of depending too much upon the machinery by which works of faith and labours of love are carried on. The instrumentalities may be wide-spread and cleverly organized, the zeal may be glowing and enlightened, the motives may be thoroughly evangelic, yet, without the agency of the Spirit, the results must be disappointing. Ezekiel's army was life-like, but not living, till the Divine breath came into it (Ezek. xxxvii. 10).

There is a danger of self-complacency. "I must succeed," says a young Sunday teacher; "I take the greatest pains with my class; I use the best educational helps; my plan of rewards has been commended; I always visit the absentees; I know I have the children's welfare at heart, and I talk earnestly to them, not forgetting to pray for a blessing on my work. And they are very regular, and seem pleased to come. I have been told that mine is the best class in the school."

Yet there may be no success granted to that Christian worker. And the cause may be that the Spirit has not been honoured by the teacher as the *only* source of success. He has not been sufficiently recognized as *the* agent in every spiritual work, and there has, therefore, been a want of dependence on his co-operation. The "excellency of speech or of wisdom" has been present, and too much trusted to, and the Spirit has withheld his influence (I Cor. ii. 4).

Gossner, in his memoir of Martin Boos, relates an incident which illustrates the truth of this. Sepl, a one-legged man, a miller in Bavaria, though adiligent student of the Scriptures, had not learned how we are justified by faith only till his pastor explained the doctrine to him, and so filled his heart with peace and joy. Then he begged him to unfold these blessed truths to his sister-in-law and her children; and they, too, became full of faith, comfort, and joy. But Sepl was not satisfied. Next door he knew there were many selfrighteous people; he would teach them also the way of the Lord more perfectly. So he took his crutches and feebly hobbled into his neighbour's house. But, Gossner tells us, "Sepl found no faith amongst them, and his hearers were even angry at him; but because they received many favours from him they did not dare to fly in his face, but one after another stole away, so that at length the preacher of faith was left sitting alone; and because there was no one to say Amen! he mournfully hobbled home again. The clergyman asked him if he had previously called upon the Holy Spirit. 'No,' said he, 'I was simple enough to think that my message would be gladly received; but I find it is not so. will be no preacher in future, but believe for myself."

Give, then, the honour to God the Spirit which is due to Him. Keep steadily in view the great fact that without His help your best efforts are useless, for an apostle cannot open a single heart, even though an inspired man (Acts xvi. 14); and

earnestly seek for yourself and your work t presence and aid of your Divine Friend.

Then wait humbly and patiently if, for reaso which He does not choose to declare, He seen to withhold that needed aid. "The wind blowe where it listeth;" and similar is the mystery of t Spirit's operations.

- "O Holy Spirit, gentle Dove,
  The thought of thy most precious love
  Sweet comfort to me brings:
  Tender it is as morning dew;
  Soft as the showers that earth renew;
  And fresh as living springs!
- "Thy 'still small voice,' it was which spoke Within my heart, and thus awoke My soul to life and peace.

  And Thou art now my heavenly Friend,
  To guide, to succour, and defend,
  Till all earth's wanderings cease.
- "I would not grieve Thee, I would be Meek as a child in following Thee; Responsive to thy call; Yet oft, alas, too well I know, Wrong words and feelings from me flow: And I, uuwatchful, fall.
- "Closer to Thee, I fain would cling;
  Hide me beneath thy sheltering wing;
  Still richer grace bestow;
  Let every action, every thought,
  Spring from the life Thou hast wrought;
  That I, like Christ may grow."



## CHAPTER IX.

#### COUNSELS ON PRAYER.

THE following counsels\* on the important subject of Prayer were drawn up by me some years ago; but on reading them over again, they appear so appropriate to your present spiritual state, that I venture to let them form a chapter in this book. I entreat you to carefully weigh what I have said concerning your approach to the Throne of Grace.

Pray with filial confidence.—Though you are to pray very reverently, yet remember you are encouraged to draw nigh to God with a spirit of perfect freedom and confiding love. Do not contemplate Him only, or chiefly, as the great and terrible God, whose anger is to be feared and whose wrath is to be deprecated. God is indeed a consuming fire; but to us, as believers, He delights to show Himself as our Father.

Again, do not suppose that God is a being like the deities of the pagan mythology, whose vengeance always needed some propitiating rite. The Father feels as much love for you as the Son feels, and has displayed that love in giving up his Son to die for you, as much as that Son has manifested his love by shedding his precious blood for your

\* These counsels are published in a separate form, under the same title, but with additional matter.

salvation. When you go to God in prayer, do not regard Him as your offended Maker, who will be persuaded to forgive you for his Son's sake; but look on Him as all love Himself, and as delighting in showing that mercy which Christ's obedience and death have rendered just.

Otherwise you will come under a spirit of bondage, instead of enjoying, as you ought and might, the filial relation in which, through your Elder Brother, you now stand.

Remember, then, that you have been brought by the Spirit of adoption into the one great family in heaven and earth, and that it is now your blessed privilege to exclaim, "Abba, Father." And when you are in doubt, when you are ready to faint under heavy trial, when your pathway lies through "the waste howling wilderness," when past sins stare you in the face, oh, remember that as a father pitieth his children, so does the Lord pity them that fear His ear is ever open to your cry; his love is ever ready to bestow comfort, strength, and peace. His Spirit waits to cheer your drooping mind, and to animate you for coming duty; yea, He shall often enlighten you by his deep searching into the will of God. You have also a High Priest who can be touched with a feeling of your infirmities, seeing He was tempted in all points like as you are, yet without sin. Come, therefore, as a child, and you shall receive a child's portion: come with that sweet, implicit confidence in the Divine love, which shall unbosom the heart with a familiar trust, and unhesitatingly cry, "Father, do with me as seemeth good in thy sight."

Pray with holy boldness.—While cherishing the most humbling sense of your own unworthinessand your views of it cannot be too humblingdwell also on the apostolic assertion, that we who are Christians have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Sinai is not before us, uprearing its terrific brow. No! yonder is Calvary, and it speaks to us of love and tenderness, of pardon and peace. Oh enter into the holiest;—the way is open, for your Saviour purchased the right of access by his own blood. Do not fear; you may be unworthy, but Christ is infinitely worthy, and you are "one with Him." Therefore be encouraged "to draw near in full assurance of faith," and "to come boldly unto the throne of grace."

Pray in faith.—How often have your prayers remained unanswered because they were uttered in a spirit of distrust! Is it not highly dishonouring to God, that you should ask for blessings without believing that God will hear and answer your petitions? Do you pray for divine direction without believing that God will guide you by his counsel? Do you ask for grace to help you in time of need, and yet feel unassured that He will give grace? Then is it a matter of surprise that you receive No! for you ask amiss. We are not straitened in God, but we are straitened in ourselves, and our unbelief lies like a sealed stone before the fountain of mercy and love. stone must be rolled aside, or else the prisoned streams of blessing cannot flow forth to your thirsting soul. Therefore, when you pray, remember

the apostle's injunction, "Let him ask in faith, nothing doubting."

Cultivate a devotional frame of mind.—If you desire to keep your mind from wandering while engaged in prayer, abstain scrupulously from everything likely to unfit you for the closet hour. It may be a thing otherwise delightful, or even desirable; but if you find that it excites in your mind thoughts and feelings from which it would be a strange and painful transition to go at once to the exercises of prayer, you will do well to pass it by. It will be a safe rule for your guidance, in whatever you are engaged, to put this question to your own heart, "Am I in a devotional frame? Could I comfortably, with my present tone and temper of mind, begin to pray?"

Seek the aid of the Holy Spirit.—Never forget that you cannot, independently of the aid of the Holy Spirit, send up one effectual prayer to the throne of grace. Seek, therefore, the Spirit's teaching; ask for his inspiring influences. You are ignorant. How can you tell what will be the best for your soul's welfare? and how can you tell what will the most tend to the advancement of the divine glory? How can you ascertain the purposes of the Almighty? There is but one way. Christ is the Word of God, and thus reveals the mind of God. The Spirit takes of the things which are Christ's, and reveals them If we have the mind of Christ, if we are unto us. in Him, then we may look for the Spirit to help our infirmities, to make intercession for us according to the will of God, to teach us the manner and objects of real prayer.

Pray for temporal blessings with moderate desire. -Some have thought it wrong to ask for things belonging to this life; but it is not wrong. find an apostle earnestly praying for "a prosperous journey." His prayer was answered—the journey was given him, although its prosperity was not exactly that which he anticipated. While you pray with intensity of feeling for those spiritual blessings which you are sure you ought to have, let your requests for other things be with submission to the wisdom and love of God, and with perfect and cheerful acquiescence his dispensations. Imitate Christ when said,. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Let your prayer be full of thanksgiving.—Your prayers are essentially defective if they are wanting in the acknowledgments of grateful praise. Every passing moment furnishes you with matter for a joyful song. Are you not bound by many claims to join the Psalmist in his glad resolve, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever; I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart"? We are told, "He that offereth praise glorifieth God." Perhaps the few joyful strains which mingle in your prayers is the reason why you enjoy so little comfort when you approach the throne of grace. You withhold the glory due unto his name while you cease to praise Him for his great name's sake; and so God, in admonitory kindness, withholds from you a fuller sense of his presence—a fuller measure of peace and joy. Therefore "offer

unto God thanksgiving," and thus "pay thy vows unto the Most High."

Set apart a fixed time for private devotions.—The morning and evening appear most suited, and thus it was intimated by the morning and evening sacrifice among the Jews. Then, in the early morn and at the quiet eventide, look to the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Let me, however, suggest the addition of another season of prayer—the middle of the day. Noon has often been chosen by the saints of God for the purposes of devotion, and ere they made the noontide meal, they have rejoiced to feed on Christ in their hearts by faith.

Whatever be the hours you fix upon ,for being alone with your God, be very careful that nothing rob you of those periods of retirement. If you value communion with your Father which seeth in secret, you will not let a light matter arrest the steps which are about to enter into the chamber. nor stay the hand which is about to shut the door while you hold sweet and holy converse with the God of your salvation. -Upon the jealous care with which you guard the sacred seasons from the encroachment of worldly duties and anxieties, will much depend your enjoyment of those seasons, and of the benefits resulting from them. Never, therefore, put off God merely from regard to man. "merely," for imperative necessity may sometimes oblige you to abridge your period of devotion; and in such case you are aware that obedience is better than sacrifice, and that the neglect of other commands of God will not be compensated by lengthened devotional engagements. Yet, if you cannot pray as *long* as usually, take care you *always pray*. It is an old and quaint saying, "that prayer and praise hinder no man's horse;" and if he who had the responsibilities of governing one hundred and twenty provinces could find time thrice every day for prayer, surely we are without excuse if we find no time for God.

Intercede for others.—This should be a prominent feature in your prayers. Do not selfishly look only on your own things; look also on the things of others. If you have now no need to take as your own prayer the supplication of the fearful apostles, "Save, Lord, or we perish," will you not, while you think of the awful condition of the world at large, and of your impenitent relatives and friends in particular, oh, will you not, slightly altering that prayer, exclaim, "Save, Lord, or they perish"? Intercession for others is not more clearly enjoined in Holy Scripture than it is enforced by the natural claims which our fellow-creatures have upon us.

And while you address your petitions for your-self to the Lord God of Sabaoth, will you forget to pray for the peace of Jerusalem? Do you wish for temporal and spiritual happiness? then remember that it is declared in regard to Jerusalem, "They shall prosper that love thee;" and, "Blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Watch against the hindrances of prayer.—As such I may enumerate self-righteousness (Luke xviii. 11-14); unbelief (Jas. i. 6, 7); carnality (Jas. iv. 3); allowed or contemplated sin (Prov. xv. 8:

Isa. lix. 1, 2; Jer. v. 25; Mic. iii. 4; Psa. lxvi. 18); idolatry (Jer. xi. 13, 14); hypocrisy (Job. xxvii. 8, 9); hardheartedness (Prov. xxi. 13); pride and vanity (Job xxxv. 12, 13); insincerity (Matt. xv. 8, 9); ostentation (Matt. vi. 5); implacableness (Matt. vi. 14, 15). Watch against these dispositions of mind, that your prayers be not hindered.

Frequent and fervent prayer is necessary to your spiritual strength.—"A praying soul makes the devil tremble." Have you failed during the day in bearing little provocations? Has your mind lost its calm and even tone? Have the temptations of the world looked almost irresistibly attractive? Has some unkind or unguarded expression passed your lips? Or have you exhibited a careless and indolent temper while discharging your daily duties? Then look back to the morning's devotional engagement, and there learn the reason why all has gone wrong with you. Perhaps you were so busy that you began the day without prayer; or if otherwise, the prayer was hurried over more as a form than as the effusion of a grateful and loving heart delighted to converse with its Maker. No wonder, then, that you were spiritually feeble, for you neglected to obtain a suitable provision for the day's need. You went forth to meet Goliath without choosing the smooth stones from the brook of prayer.

Remember that your chamber is to be your armoury; there you are to take unto yourself the whole armour of God; there you are to give a keen edge to your weapons; there you are to brace yourself for the dangers awaiting you.

From the throne of grace Daniel passed to the lions' den, and he escaped unhurt. From the throne of grace should you also pass to worldly trials; and with Daniel's God and Daniel's faith you will escape the temptations which are in the world, and come off more than conqueror.

I am often reminded of the beautiful moral which is furnished by a certain Eastern story. It relates the mischances, many and lamentable, of a dervish, who, after long consultation with himself as to the probable cause of so unfortunate a day, felt assured it was the fact of his having forgotten, while performing his morning devotions, to wash his hands. If we go forth of a morning, not with unwashen hands, but with unwashen hearts; if we go with the sins of the past night unconfessed and unforgiven; if we go with mercy unsought and grace uncraved, may not we have to trace to this more than ceremonial defilement a long list of miserable failures and unhappy faults?

When were the hosts of Amalek victorious, but when the arms of Moses in weariness hung down? And if you would put *your* enemies to flight, lift up the hands which hang down, and gain the victory by frequent kneeling before the mercy-seat.

Exercise a waiting spirit.— David says, "To Thee in the morning will I direct my prayer, and will look up." Learn to look up, as if you watched the flight of your prayer while it soared to the heaven of heavens. Look up as the eyes of a maiden are wont to be directed to the hands of her mistress. Note the blessing even while it is yet

travelling in answer to your soul. Fix your eye on the little cloud, that you may excite hope of the abundance of coming rain.

But while you wait in faith, wait also patiently. Though the blessing tarry, wait for it, for it will come; it will not really tarry. Remember that your time is not always God's time, and that His time must be the best. Wait for an answer without discontent and murmuring. Wait in humility. If you who are dust and ashes have ventured to speak to the King, it certainly betokens presumption if you do not quietly and reverently wait until He chooses to reply. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness;" and when the right moment arrives, your heart's desire shall be granted. Therefore, "wait, I say, upon the Lord;"

Look on prayer as the channel through which your blessings come—All we receive is to be in answer to prayer. Prayer is the vessel which goes to the fountain of Christ's fulness, and draws thence copious supplies of rich and sufficient grace. Prayer is the hand which gathers from the King's banquet-table rare and dainty food, with which the hungry soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness. Prayer is the key which unlocks the treasure-house of divine love, and admits the child of God into the possession of the "all things" which are his for Christ's sake. Prayer touches the hem of the Saviour's garment, and thus draws virtue to heal every wound and to cure every sickness.

Do not, however, imagine that God gives

because we pray; but He gives as we pray. He Himself, in his sovereign mercy, has already provided for us "good things which pass man's understanding," and in the plenitude of his love is ready to shower down abundant blessings. But He has chosen that the bestowal of his favours shall be connected with the frequency and fervour of our prayers; that his mercy shall be in answer to the cry of want.

Why is this? Why does God wait for our prayers before He gives what He knows we need?

It were enough to say, Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight. But reasons are evident. It is to stimulate our sluggish minds, to keep us from spiritual sloth, to show us that we are invested with responsibility; it is to augment our faith, to awaken anxiety, to increase holiness. When God intends to give a mercy to one of his children, He puts into his mind a feeling that that mercy is needed. The believer is thus led to supplicate its bestowal: and then, in answer to the entreaty, the prepared blessing is granted. instance of this is furnished by the remarkable passage where the Divine intentions are clearly and positively stated regarding the exercise of mercy and goodness towards the Jews, but where it is added, "I will vet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them;" Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

Remember, therefore, that there are blessings beyond your highest conception accumulating for you; but the streams of blessing will not flow into your needy and empty soul unless you provide a channel for them. That channel, as I have told you, is prayer.

A guilty conscience will keep you from prayer.— If you become guilty of a temporary neglect of private prayer, look for the cause of it to some sin recently committed. You may possibly be scarcely aware what sin it is, and it may take much examination to discover it; but be assured it is there, "sore letting and hindering you." Israel of old failed in battle with the men of Ai, and it was owing to Achan's "trespass in the accursed thing." So will you find each sin an Achan to your soul; it will impede your activity, it will deaden your energy, it will turn your faith into distrust, and you will not dare to approach God. Did not Adam and Eve, after sinning, shrink from intercourse with their Maker? Does not a child, who during his parents' absence has been guilty of infringing parental law. instinctively avoid meeting his father upon his return home? Such will be your case if you fall into any sin. It will take from you your past confidence. in your heavenly Father; it will rob you of your childlike dependence on His love. conscience will teach you to avoid His searching glance; and, as if thus you were more removed from the Divine scrutiny, you will keep aloof from the throne of grace.

But if you find that you are neglecting prayer through that uncomfortable feeling of guilt which prevents your enjoyment of devotion, let me earnestly press upon you, as your wisest course, to go at once, however ashamed and reluctant you feel, to the throne of grace, and there confess how you have broken the commands of God. Instead of avoiding prayer, you should the rather be drawn to it, that so without delay you may avail yourself of that precious blood which is able to cleanse from all sin.

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Do not confine yourself to forms of prayer.—It is not likely that a few general sentences can express the whole of a Christian's wants, nor that a form pre-composed by another should always be exactly adapted to the state of the heart of the person who uses it. The object of the prayers in devotional works is chiefly to be a help to prayer. They are not meant to supersede the better practice of speaking to God with the free, fresh, and warm feelings of the . heart, as they are variously excited by the different circumstances of life. Their design is to lead to it -to lead you into holy habits of devotion-to lead you to the daily custom of prayer-till the words of others shall not be required to express your desires, but you shall be able, in language which your own soul dictates, and under the suggestive influences of the Holy Spirit, to pour out your whole heart before God.

But while I think that the Christian ought to form such habits of intercourse with his heavenly Father as will render the compositions of others unnecessary, I am not insensible to the value of forms, properly used, in providing a groundwork for our prayers, which we can alter or add to, as occasion may require, and as an aid at times when our minds, harassed by afflictive circumstances, may find it difficult to collect the distracted, wandering thoughts. In such seasons it may be

well to "take with you words, and turn unto the Lord."

Study well the devotional character of the Saviour.—Take him as your pattern in prayer; strive to have the mind which was in Him, that you may pray as He prayed. Withdraw, as Christwithdrew, from the notice or the applause of man, while you hold communion with your Father. Let the thought of your Redeemer spending whole nights in prayer rouse you from spiritual sloth. Let the same love to others breathe in your prayers as was beautifully displayed in Christ's intercession for his disciples; and let love, earnest love, to your enemies prove you have learnt to say, as your Lord in his dying torture exclaimed, "Father, forgive them." When your heart seems lifeless while engaged in the exercises of devotion, think in what an agony of feeling and moral suffering Christ must have been, when He prayed so earnestly that bloody sweat oozed painfully from his holy limbs. Would you learn to pray, ever look to Jesus, and you will find that in prayer, as well as in every other duty, "He has left us an example, that we should follow his steps."

Finally, "Watch unto prayer."—" Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (1 Pet. iv. 7; Ephes. vi. 18).



## CHAPTER X.

## ON CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

NE of the first questions with those who are inquiring the way to Zion is, How far is conformity to the world right? It is one often addressed to me by young people, and they profess to have much difficulty in answering it for themselves.

Now there can be no doubt that we are to give up the world. God's Word speaks about it in very strong and solemn terms. Our Saviour described it as His enemy, and therefore the enemy of His people (John xv. 18; xvi. 20; xvii. 14, 15, 16). His apostles are equally plain in what they In their view it is something which sav about it. defiles (James i. 27); it ensnares (1 Tim. vi. 9; 1 John ii. 16); it bewitched Demas (2 Tim. iv. 10); it ought not to be loved (1 John ii. 15); its spirit is contrary to the Gospel (I Cor. ii. 12); it despises Christians (1 Cor. iv. 13); believers are crucified to it (Gal. vi. 14); it is at enmity with God, and so are all its friends (James iv. 4); it is transient (1 John ii. 17); it lieth in wickedness (I John v. 19); it is to be condemned (I Cor. xi. 32); its conquest is the object of the Christian's faith (1 John v. 4); we are not to be conformed to it (Rom. xii. 2); we are to come out from among the worldly, to be separate, not to touch the unclean thing (2 Cor. vi. 17).

Is not this strong language? The Church and the world are, you see, in direct antagonism. There can be no parleying, no truce between them. The world will love you if you are one of its own; if you are not, it will hate you. And its spirit and course are such, that if you are a true disciple of Christ you must feel opposed to it. You cannot honour Jesus as your king, and yet frequent the court of the prince of this world (John viii. 23, 31).

This has always been felt an urgent matter by really earnest disciples. Legh Richmond used to say, "Even where there is no positive evil, I think it important to draw a strong line of demarcation between the Church and the world. The mixed multitudes set the Israelites a lusting after the fleshpots of Egypt, and evil communications never fail to corrupt good manners."

Yetthis eminent Christian was no gloomy, morose person, for it was often said by his children, "We love religion because we see papa so lovely and happy under its influence."

Here is the testimony of a young disciple, loved by all who knew her, and gifted with most winning manners. Writing to a friend, Adelaide Newton says: "I scarcely think it possible to draw the line too strongly between light and darkness. We cannot be real Christians only in private. It is written, 'By their fruits ye shall know them,' and if we are really following Christ it will be evident to all around us. Let me, therefore, entreat you at once

to resolve to make up your mind to devote yourself entirely, soul and body, to Him. I know you can never be really happy till you do."

Besides, you are pledged by the avowal of your discipleship to a \*complete renunciation of "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." You have realised it as a duty, and are bound by the terms of your own self-surrender to discharge that duty. It is one of the things which form your solemn vow of consecration to the Redeemer's service. You must be false to your Baptismal covenant if you are a friend of the world.

And yet we cannot withdraw ourselves altogether from worldly society. Our Saviour did not pray for the removal of his people out of the world, but for their sanctification while in it; and St. Paul allows that if we keep no company with worldly people, we "must needs go out of the world." Far from enjoining this, he expressly directs us to cultivate eminent holiness, so that we may "shine as lights in the world." John the Baptist, with his camel's-hair coat and his desert fare, is not our model, but Jesus is, who went to a wedding (John ii. 1); dined with a Pharisee (Luke vii. 36); and was even reproached for His sociability (Matt. xi. 19).

Your family may be a worldly one, yet you must mix with them; you must share in the home duties, joys, and sorrows. You must sometimes visityour relatives, even though they may be out of sympathy with your religious views. You may have unavoidable business relations with the worldly. You may be in the same form at school, at the same desk in the counting-house, at the same table in a workroom, at the same bench in a carpenter's shop, or in the same kitchen; companions, by force of circumstances (not of your own unfettered choice), of those who are strangers to your God and to your hope.

How, then, are you to avoid conformity to the world? This is, I confess, a difficult question; and it is so for these reasons.

First, because religious life is not obedience to a set of rules, as I have already shown.

Even if it were, we still should be unable to lay down a rule for everything. The Bible certainly enjoins many duties, and forbids many sins, in a clear and positive manner; yet it does not in direct terms command us to have family prayer, nor prohibit us from frequenting a racecourse. Whether these things are proper or improper must be settled by a reference to the general principles of Christian motive and action, which are evident and abundant in the Sacred Word.

Still, it is often difficult to apply these principles. Even in allowable things this will be the case, for lawful things are not always expedient (I Cor. vi. 12); and it may require no little skill to determine the expediency. And as you are young, your inexperience will increase your difficulty. There are many questions growing out of your present circumstances which are not easily answered. No Scripture precept seems to bear upon them, either particularly, or, so far as you can see generally.

And, again, what would be a temptation to indulge a worldly spirit in one person will not be in If you were deaf and blind you might venture into a theatre, or upon a racecourse, without fear of its contamination. If you were of a heavy, morose temper, a gay party might not become a snare. But, suppose you are passionately fond of music, then you will be naturally responsive to the charms of an opera or to the seductive influences of a Romish service. In these will lie a danger for you. Or you are of a lively temperament. easily excited to mirth, and when you go to a large mixed party, you are carried away by its gaiety into extremes which afterwards pain you as having been inconsistent with Christian sobriety.

But that which makes it most difficult to decide about conformity to the world is, the great amount of worldliness among professedly Christian people. A very large proportion of those who call themselves the disciples of Christ are scarcely at all different from the avowedly worldly. In dress, fashion, lowtoned morals, selfishness, vain-glory, and mock devoutness they coincide so nearly with the Saviour's enemies, that I find it difficult to believe they are his friends. Yet these are the so-called Christians around you, and I should not be surprised if you were disposed to try things by their standard. These old, established followers of Christ, so satisfied as they seem with their religious course, must surely know better, you will say, than an inexperienced, ignorant beginner like you. What they have all agreed upon as the right way of treading the narrow path cannot fail to commend itself strongly to you. It must be difficult for you to rise above the level of the religiousness around you, even if you thought it necessary; and it may be difficult to realise the necessity.

I know this is felt to be a great difficulty, for my young friends often speak of it as the difficulty in their way. They speak to me about it in some such words as these:-"It is my heart's desire to live wholly to Christ. I want to be His unreservedly. But how can I set myself against all my relatives and friends? You say, give up the world, and I know I ought to do so. I am sure there should be a broad line of distinction between Christ and the world, so that the world should not be able to say 'He is one of us.' But if I were now to give up the amusements in which I have joined, and am even now joining, my family and all my friends would laugh at my 'over-religiousness.' It would seem to them as if I were saying, 'You are living wickedly: I am ever so much better than you!' If I tell them I do not really care for these things as I used to do (which is the truth), it will seem utterly incomprehensible to those who love not Jesus. I love Jesus, and am not ashamed of Him; but many of my friends are religious enough in the eves of those around them, and they will be astonished and angry at my refusing to join them in what they think to be right. They will call it Phariseeism, hypocrisy, asceticism, and all sorts of dreadful names, and tell me I have no right, by withdrawal from their circle, to condemn those who are older and wiser than I. And, indeed, oftentimes I am in doubt as to its being right to make myself appear singular and so different to other religious people. I am young, and cannot be a good judge. I have always regarded my intimate friends as Christians, yet they lead what I cannot help now calling a very worldly life. But is it a worldly life? Are they wrong, or am I wrong? I wish I could tell what I ought to do."

Perhaps these words might fitly come from your lips, dear reader. They describe your present difficulty, and you again say to me, "How far is conformity to the world right?" Let me endeavour to find the answer to your question.

We shall not give an untrue or unfair definition of the world if we say that it consists in whatever is not in harmony with Christ. What I said about the spirit and practice of the world proves this. Well, then, whenever you find any scene or pursuit to be such as you cannot place in association with Jesus, there is the world. At least there it is for you, whatever other people may find it. And, if possible, you are to give it up, however strong its attraction, however great the difficulty of its surrender.

Try, then, by this test any matter about which you are doubtful. Ask yourself how far you can connect it with your consecration to the Redeemer's service. Will it be a pleasure that it would not seem improper to ask Jesus to share? He was kindhearted, genial, sympathising; interested in even the children at play; bade the "children of the bridechamber rejoice," and taught his disciples how to behave at feasts. He never encouraged austerity, formality, or sad countenances. Well, this matter

about which you are now perplexed, how does it look if you view it in company with Jesus? Remember you are one with Christ, and He is one with you (I Cor. vi. 17). Take heed that you do nothing which would be detrimental to that union.

To show how worldliness and true piety contrast strikingly, when accidentally brought together, I sketch for you an incident which was related to me some years ago.

A Christian minister, eminent both for his piety and his eloquent preaching, was once invited by some relatives to spend the evening at their house. They ought to have known better than to ask him. for they had sent out cards for a dance, and they must have known how thoroughly he disapproved of such worldly scenes. However, they did ask him; and he, expecting it was to a quiet family party, consented to go. Judge his surprise and disappointment when he was ushered into a ballroom. filled with the gay votaries of pleasure waiting for the music to strike up. For a moment he paused in wonderment; the next, with that ready wit and selfpossession which distinguished him, he quietly established himself in a corner of the room, and, taking out his pocket Bible, requested attention for a few minutes. Then he proceeded to give them a brief but touching exposition of a few verses of God's Word. I do not know how long the party lasted after that, but I do know that there was no dancing that night. The incongruity between Bible reading and quadrilles struck the dancers. That the world is something out of harmony with Christ they were forced to recognise. And conscience was so faithful inpointing outthis contrast that they really could not, for that evening at least, resume their frivolity.

Do not, however, forget that the world is in the heart rather than in circumstances. Daniel, the prime minister, managing the affairs of a hundred and twenty provinces, was a busy man, but not a worldly man. The farmer who said to himself, "Soul, take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry," was really a worldly man. Yet you might not have thought so, had you gazed upon the two men. Had you been in the royal palace, and seen Daniel dressed in Oriental splendour, surrounded by guards, and scribes, and messengers, giving audience to courtly satraps, pressing the royal signet on State mandates. and treated with the most humble deference, you might have supposed he must be a worldly man, too much secularised by the life you saw him lead daily. And could you have seen the man of whom Christ spoke (Luke xii. 16), you would have observed a plain, plodding man, in village garb, following his plough, sowing his seed, gathering his harvest, and directing his hired servants as they piled the shining grain in the ample granary; and as you saw a pleased smile steal over his face when the last sheaf was housed, and heard, as he softly whispered to himself, his satisfaction with the success of his husbandry, you would have been likely to say, "What a pretty picture of rural life; how little of the world seems to have entered here!" And you would have been wrong; wrong in either case; for the world was in that country plodder's quiet breast, and the world was not in the heart of the princely Daniel.

"Suffer me first to go and bury my father" sounds like the dictate of filial piety; yet it was the utterance of a worldly spirit, and our Saviour reproved it (Matt. viii. 22.)

You might be disposed to say, "Seeing it is so difficult to decide about worldly conformity, would it not be a good plan to really quit the world, as nuns and monks do? If we could shut ourselves up in some quiet cloister, and devote our days to meditation and prayer, we should escape the contaminating influence of contact with the world."

My answer is this:

First, it would be childish to do so. Just as foolish as if a child were to say "Because I have cut myself, I will never as long as I live use a knife."

Again, it would be unfair. God has not made us solitary beings, without ties of kindred or friendship. Our relationships imply our responsibilities, and we cannot discharge these in a convent. We ought to take our share of life's burdens, and we have noright to shift them on to other shoulders.

Moreover, we should lose the advantage of life's discipline if we retreated from its duties, anxieties, and dangers into a hermit's cell. Our earthly life is designed to make us meet for our heavenly inheritance. How can a hermit "bear the burden and heat of the day" as a worker in the vineyard, or "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"? We cannot overcome the world if we are not in it. We are to take up our cross daily and bear it after Jesus; and "He went in and out among us."

It is also unnatural. It does violence to our social feelings. It substitutes for the sweet family bond, the mechanical union of a monk's vow.

And it is injurious. Asceticism does not help piety. The most terrible visions of temptation are those of the anchorite's cell. The most worldly scene you can possibly find is the interior of a convent. Frivolous talk and pursuits, petty intrigues, childish passions, abject superstition, unhallowed reveries characterize conventual life. The world is there, and the mask which covers it is very thin.

These five reasons may suffice. I trust they will. I should be sorry to think that you could be so foolish as to covet the miserable life of the monastery. You are to work for Christ, and to sanctify all your home and social duties by undertaking them in a religious spirit. All day long you are to be about your Father's business.

Yes, and yet therein may be a source of danger. There is worldliness in much of the religious activity of the present day.

"I do not know which is the greater world," says a good man—" a glittering world or a glittering religion."

You may be a good keeper of vineyards of others, and forget to keep your own. You may give all your goods to feed the poor, and be destitute of love. You may gather the manna without eating it. You may busy yourself in preparing an entertainment for Jesus, and yet become so cumbered with your much serving as to receive his rebuke and not his praise (Luke x. 41.) In these days

of district-visiting, working-meetings, missionary efforts, almsgiving, crusades against ignorance, vice, and error, it is quite possible to make evident our zeal for the Lord while our motives will not bear his scrutiny (2 Kings x. 16; Gal. iv. 17). The house of prayer may become a den of thieves (Matt. xxi. 13). Watch, therefore, against a worldly spirit, lest it creep in under the guise of piety.

Of course you will remember that there is an innocent conformity with worldly customs. You are not to don a Quaker's garb to show that you are a Christian. You are not to violate the ordinary rules of society for the purpose of manifesting an unworldly spirit. Henry Martyn, when preaching among the heathen, let his beard grow long, because he saw that it gained him more respect. Paul complied innocently with worldly customs when he claimed the privileges of Roman citizenship, availed himself of the law of appeal to the Emperor, and addressed his representatives at Cæsarea in the language of courtesy.

Take care not to judge your fellow disciples in reference to worldliness. Do not say you are sure they cannot be Christians because they seem so worldly.

The late Lady Colquhoun, one of the brightest specimens of Christian consecration, was, in her early spiritual life, an occasional frequenter of the theatre and of ball-rooms. Yet you would have been wrong if you had said she was not an earnest follower of the Lord.

How was it?

Because she had been brought up to think these

things right, and the force of habit was still strong. But, as the light shone into her mind more vividly, and she grew in knowledge and grace, she saw the sinfulness of these amusements, and, without hesitation or compromise, abandoned them for ever.

And in the memoir of the beloved and devoted M'Cheyne we find it recorded that "at first the light dawned slowly, so slowly that for a considerable time he allowed himself an occasional plunge into scenes of gaiety; and even after he had entered the Divinity Hall he could be persuaded to indulge in lighter pursuits, at least during the first two years of his attendance. It was not until he painfully realized the unholiness of these pleasures, and their antagonism to his mental peace, that he learned to struggle against their fascinations."

But though you are not to judge others in this matter, you may judge yourself. Do not make the worldliness of those who, as you think, are sincere disciples, an excuse for your own worldliness. It would be no excuse for your going on the stage that you knew an actor who was a pious man.

"Well, now," you may say, "there is the instance of Naaman; was he right or wrong when he bowed himself in the house of Rimmon?"

I do not see that we are called to settle the question. The prophet did not. The practical question is what is right and wrong for you, not for Naaman. As long as he held his post about the king he was, I suppose, bound by its obligations. If they were found to be irreconcilable with his

duty to Jehovah, it would have been proper that he should resign his office.

It will just now be wiser for you to avoid even some innocent or religious things if you find that they tend to make you less anxious about your spiritual interests. You are young in the Christian life, and, of course, not very strong. It is right for the firemen to enter a burning house, but it would be wrong for a child to do so. It is healthy work for a man to go out in blustering weather, and brave the windy gust; but the nurse with the baby in her arms does right to shield it from the gale. And you are now tender and immature, a babe in grace. It will not be safe for you at present to do something which, by and by, when you have grown into spiritual manhood, will be no tax upon your strength.

Your grand concern is to maintain a close walk with God, leaving to Him the disposal of your life, and trusting that He will order your steps.

And whenever you are in difficulty how to act, recollect that your Intercessor is ever saying on your behalf, "I pray, not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from the evil." Make His prayer your plea at the throne of grace, and you shall be enabled to walk even as He walked.



## CHAPTER X1.

## WORKING FOR CHRIST.

YOU desire to work for Christ. You wish you were now at work.

This is one evidence of a converted state; and an evidence with which we cannot dispense, for how can a man love Christ who is not anxious to be employed in His service?

Let this desire become a prayer: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.)

Do not be surprised if the reply to that prayer is not instantly given. Saul had to wait three days before he learned his Lord's will concerning him. And so, perhaps, it is with you; you have not yet received a definite reply; and you are disposed to be restless and discontented. Guard yourself against this temptation, for it is a temptation. Satan finds that he cannot lessen the ardour of your zeal, and therefore he is trying to fan it into a spirit of fretfulness. He is endeavouring to make you think that you cannot be growing in the spiritual life unless you are always acting, always talking, always doing.

One duty lies before you, and with much urgency of claim; it is that of endeavouring to bring those of your friends to Christ who are yet strangers to Him. Every believer in Christ is bound to attempt this. If you know Him to be your Saviour you ought to point others to Him.

Many considerations enforce this duty.

Love to Christ is the great motive.

Desires for God's glory form a strong inducement.

The very possession of saving truth implies an obligation to diffuse it.

Christian consistency demands your efforts for the salvation of lost souls.

The facilities of social intercourse encourage the discharge of this duty.

Another motive is your natural affection for unconverted friends.

Your own prospect of heavenly glory is connected with this, "for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

You may object: "I am young, and inexperienced as a disciple; would it be right for me to try to convert others when I am only just converted myself? Would it not be better to wait till I have gained more knowledge and experience?"

No; if you know that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, you know enough to become a light-bearer. Andrew did not wait to become experienced before he looked for his brother and brought him to Jesus. Nor did Philip; as soon as he knew Christ he began to make Him known (John i. 42, 45).

Christ Himself commands it (Mark v. 19; Rev. xxii. 17).

Your youth or inexperience is a reason for humility—for earnest prayer for wisdom, and for careful study of the best ways of doing good—but is no excuse for inaction.

To show how natural it is that Christ's disciples should wish to be evangelists, and how it seems almost impossible that they should hesitate to carry out that wish, I take an illustration from the work of an American writer, who describes, in a striking manner, the close of the last war between America and our own country.

"The prospects of our nation," he says, "were shrouded in gloom. Our harbours were blockaded. Communication coastwise between our ports was cut off. Our immense annual products were mouldering in our warehouses. Our currency was reduced to irredeemable paper. Differences of political opinion were embittering the peace of many households. No one could predict when the contest would terminate, or discover the means by which it could much longer be protracted. It happened that, one afternoon in February, a ship was discovered in the offing, which was supposed to be a cartel bringing home our Commissioners at Ghent from their unsuccessful mission. The sun had set gloomily before any intelligence from the vessel had reached the city. Expectation became painfully intense as the hours of darkness drew on. At length a boat reached the wharf, announcing the fact that a treaty of peace had been signed, and was waiting for nothing but the action of our Government to become a law. The men on whose ears these words first fell rushed in breathless haste into the city to repeat them to their friends, shouting, as they ran through the streets, Peace! Peace! Peace!

Every one who heard the sound repeated it. From house to house, from street to street, the news spread with electric rapidity. The whole city was in commotion. Men bearing lighted torches were flying to and fro, shouting Peace! Peace! Peace! When the rapture had partially subsided one idea occupied every mind. But few men slept that night. In groups they were gathered in the streets and by the fireside, beguiling the hours of midnight by reminding each other that the agony of war was over, and that a worn-out and distracted country was again about to enter upon its wonted career of prosperity. Thus, every one becoming a herald, the news soon reached every man, woman and child in the city, and filled their hearts with joy."

And you, who know of a better peace (Eph. ii. 14, 17), can you refrain from eagerly proclaiming its good news? Is it not reasonable that you also should be a herald?

But how shall you become such a herald? You cannot literally take a torch and rush through the streets at night, shouting Peace! How is your proclamation to be made?

You are quite right to ask the question. Much, humanly speaking, will depend on your acting in a judicious way. You are not to violate the rules of ordinary politeness. You are not to commence an abrupt attack on the person you wish to benefit. You are not to sternly denounce him as a sinner. You are not to force openings for your earnest appeals. It will seldom be right for you to speak in a personal way to those who are your elders or superiors in rank. And even among your equals

in age or station, some are reserved, haughty, or passionate, and will resent your well-meant efforts.

A kind, respectful letter will often be preferable to a verbal address. Good books may be quietly placed within their reach. An effort to bring them to the house of God may be a first step towards the Cross. A moment when the heart is softened by sorrow or sickness may be wisely seized for a gentle whisper about Gilead's balm. "He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. xi. 30).

A very little thing may make a crisis in the history of a soul. Some cleft may be riven in the hardest rock where the seed of truth may hide. Here is a striking instance.

A Christian lady, anxious to benefit a young sailor, who was dying of consumption, and ignorant of the Saviour, sought admission at the seaside lodgings where he had been taken in the vain hope of restoring him to health. He was a stranger to her. After some difficulty she gained an interview. At first he seemed pleased by her conversation, but when she ventured to give it a personal turn he became gloomy, and said, in a most forbidding tone, "I wish vou would go. I never asked you to come, and I do not want you here." Thus repulsed, the visitor had no choice but to take her departure, which, however, she did not do before she had asked the sick man to permit her to repeat four texts of Scripture which were in her mind. One of these was, "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18). When she had finished,

with a frown of defiance he pointed to the door; and she went away with a heavy heart. Passing a florist's, the thought occurred to her to send the poor young man some flowers. There was an azalea in full bloom, like a bower. "The very thing," she said to herself, "to brighten up that dingy room." So she wrote the address, and added The paper was lost, and the a kind message. flower was left without any message. They thought it was some mistake: but the sick man cried out. "It is for me, I am sure. I know who sent it. and it is a kindness I don't deserve from her. Let it stand where I can see it, and never move it till I die." So there it remained at the foot of his bed. one mass of crimson blossoms, and he looked at it with a languid smile. Then he said, "Did you ever see such a beautiful crimson?" And then, "What was it she said about crimson? Oh, it was something about sin, surely!" After this he remained lost in thought for some time, and then said "Mother, give me a Bible. I will find it for myself."

The Lord's time of grace had come. That crimson azalea was the silent messenger of peace. Its blossoms were an allegory of Divine love to the sufferer's heart.

When, some days afterwards, the lady called again, with faint hope of even seeing him, she found easy entrance into his room: he stretched out both hands to welcome her, and then, without a word, pointed to the flower. A moment afterwards he said, between his quick-drawn breathings, "Though my sins be red like crimson they shall be whiter

than snow, for the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin. That flower has been my red Bible; my mother will tell you all about it;" and he signed to her to speak.

A few hours afterwards he quietly passed away.

What a little thing had saved his soul! A little thing, meant only as a kindness, not to point a moral, had been made the instrument in God's hands of a sinner's conversion. What we are tempted to regard as a failure may be only God's way of giving us success.

Besides this way of direct personal effort for the conversion of sinners, there are modes of usefulness which, if you bring to them a hearty desire to serve and glorify Jesus, will furnish channels for the outflow of your sanctified zeal.

You may teach in Sunday-schools. This is a high and honourable office, and at the present time, when semi-Popery and false philosophic theories conceal their insidious and dangerous tenets under forms designed especially to delude and ensnare the young, your teaching, if, as I trust it would be, clear and discriminating, may preserve your scholars from those that lie in wait to deceive. But remember three things about your teaching.

It must be attractive, or else the children may be repelled from the Gospel by the austere gloom with which you have surrounded it.

It must be intelligent, or their active minds will be wearied by inane reiterations. You must treat them as reasonable beings; you must speak to them face to face, heart to heart; you must show how the daily events of life are eloquent in their teachings, and how, as young disciples, they have a business of their own to do for Jesus in this busy world.

Thirdly, the Atonement must be prominent in your teaching, the key-stone of your literary arch. In all your mental ramblings in search of knowledge, each path, however winding it may be, must always bring your pupils and yourself easily and pleasantly in view of the Cross. Else they will drift away without rudder, compass, or pilot on the great ocean of thought and opinion; their little barks will be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and perhaps make that worst of all shipwrecks, the shipwreck of faith!

These young persons are soon to enter on the stirring scenes of mature life. They will form the next generation. Their influence may not be calculated. Their responsibility must be great. helping them you are applying no slight moral leverage to society at large. If in our Sundayschools we can mould after Christ's pattern our future merchants, generals, and statesmen-and who shall say that, in this age of social uprising, such will not spring from our institutions?—nay, if we can only thus fashion the character of our women, and give (what Napoleon vainly asked for France) Christian mothers to Great Britain, we achieve no ignoble success, and need wish for no more glorious post than that of an unknown teacher of an unknown school.

Of course these remarks equally apply to teachers in day-schools, to tutors and governesses in private families, to servants in nurseries, and to all who in any other way are brought into frequent and influential contact with the young.

You may take part in mothers' meetings, now so commonly held, helping to cut out, to speak kindly, and to read instructive books.

· You may join a Bible class or a Bible reading, and, besides acquiring fresh knowledge for yourself, seek to give knowledge to others.

You may visit some blind or sick person, or some old man or woman, poor and lonely, and become the pole-star of hope to them, the sunbeam of their clouded life.

You may aid Christian missions by economising your personal expenditure, so as to contribute to their support; you may manage some juvenile association; you may form or join a working party, so as to help in sending boxes of acceptable gifts to the wives of missionaries abroad. You may make the conversion of the heathen a constant matter of earnest prayer.

A Bible district—that is a certain number of houses which you will canvass for weekly contributions, enabling the inmates to purchase Bibles for themselves—may be a pleasant sphere of Christian work.

In reference to district-visiting, my advice is, Wait till your experience of life's cares and sorrows has become greater, your religious knowledge deeper, and your Christian character more stable. It is not wise for you to be brought into contact with the vice and misery of our courts and alleys till you are older.

The distribution of religious tracts is also a very

profitable Christian labour. Instances of good done in this way are numberless.

But, while suggesting modes of Christian usefulness, I hope you will not forget that *living to Christ* is a true working for Christ.

You may have no other field of labour than your own home, and no other means of cultivating it than by the influence of godly living. Your parents may object to your quitting their house on any Christian errand. Domestic requirements may leave you no opportunity for external enterprises. Your time may not be at your own disposal.

Moreover, your home position may be such as to render it almost impossible that you should use direct effort for the benefit of those with whom you live. If you are to do any good at all, it can only be by the attractiveness and consistency of your life as a disciple.

But you may thus do great good. True piety speaks for itself. Who will be so likely to read the "living epistle" as those before whom it daily unrolls itself, and who discern the fresh writing upon it? (2 Cor. iii. 3). And, reading, they may learn to love that Saviour whom you thus reveal. You may never be called to shine as a sun, illuminating an empire, but you have it in your power to shine as a candle, and a candle gives light to all that are in the house (Matt. v. 15).

And how shall you do this?

Not by some special display of religious fervour, which may seem unnatural and histrionic. Not by cultivating a peculiar manner which you may intend to express a pious spirit, but which will probably be called "sanctimoniousness." Not by keeping aloof so far as you can from your family, as if you wished to be an alien in the household. Not by coldly reproving any faults in those around you, as if you would say, "Stand apart, I am holier than thou."

Such things would condemn the doctrine rather than adorn it (Titus ii. 10). Christianity is not a mask, a dress, a tone, a ceremony; it is not even a "new moon," or "a Sabbath;" it is a pure, holy, joyous spirit which animates the entire life of a believer in the freest and most natural exercise of its powers. It takes the common duties of daily life and elevates them to a spiritual service; it makes the humblest kitchen, where a Christian servant plainly lives for Christ, sacred as the threshing-floor of Araunah. The smallest home duties, the occasions of sympathy with little home trials, the openings for friendly counsel tiny acts of self-denial, of forbearance, of patience, of affection:—here is a sphere which an angel need not disdain to occupy.

Here, then, you are to work for Christ, by living to Christ, by letting Christ's life which is within you manifest its presence. Remember that "life" and "light" are inseparable, when you speak of Christ (John i. 4). Wherever He is as the Life, He is as the Light. If you are living for Him, you are shining for Him.

And that light will fall on the paths of all with whom you live. They will find it a pleasant thing (John v. 35): And God's grace may also

make it a saving thing to them, giving to you the happy privilege of thereby lighting for them their way into the path of peace.

"You see," said a young man, when questioned as to the spiritual change which was visible in him, "it's all our Mary's work; she got some of Christ's light into her, and it shone so clearly we could not but see it, and wish our hearts were like hers."

Do not wait for great opportunities. Use thankfully the slightest opening for the exercise of a loving, beneficent spirit. Remember what Henry Martyn said, after carrying some grapes to allay the feverish thirst of a dying sailor: "How great the pleasure of doing good even to the bodies of men!"

And do this in a quiet, self-forgetting spirit. Be content to do good, and remain unknown and unapplauded: A traveller in Asia Minor, in a time of distressing drought, found a vase of water under a little shed by the roadside for the refreshment of weary travellers. This had been placed there by a man in the neighbourhood, who brought the water from a long distance: Every morning he filled the vase before going to his work. His only motive was a kind consideration of the wants of thirsty travellers: he was never there to receive thanks or money.

This chapter may close with some practical hints to aid you in working rightly.

First, ascertain your work. Do not attempt Christian work at random. Some kinds may be more adapted to you than others. Make it a matter of earnest prayer that God would assign your post of duty; consult your minister as to what corner of the vineyard would be the best for you to cultivate. If you do not feel drawn to any special labour, simply place your services at his disposal, and let him give you something to do.

You will then have the comfort of thinking, when tempted to be discouraged, "I did not place myself here. I have been called to occupy it. So I must not give it up;" whereas, if you are self-appointed, you may afterwards be disposed to think you ran before you were sent (Jer. xxiii. 21).

Exercise tact. Pray for the gift of spiritual skill, so that you may become a good workman (2 Tim. ii. 15).

It is recorded of the late Henry Venn Elliott that he was "remarkable for his tact in a sick-room. He knew the value of a short visit and a few words. I was present on one occasion when he came to see a suffering relative, whom he found feeble and languid. Taking her hand, he said, 'I see you are weak, and cannot bear much talking.' She answered that it was so, and that she could not even pray. 'On the morning of the battle of Blenheim,' he replied, 'a Christian soldier in the army of the Duke of Marlborough was overheard to offer up this short praver: "O Lord, think Thou of me this day, for Thou knowest I cannot think of Thee."' With these words, uttered in his own soft, melodious intonations, he gently pressed the hand he was holding, and, with a look of affectionate sympathy. quitted the room. More than ten years after I heard our mutual relative advert to that visit, that manner, and those few words, as having proved a source of comfort of which time had not even dimmed the remembrance."

Be punctual in the discharge of your benevolent duties. The voluntariness of your work does not relax the strictness of its obligations. It is said of Melancthon, the celebrated Reformer, that he expected not only the hour but the minute to be fixed when making an engagement. Acquire a deeper sense of the value of time. The author of "Guesses at Truth" remarks that God asks only a tenth of our money, while He demands a seventh of our time.

Act from principle, not impulse. Keep steadily in your present path, and do not yield to the temptation of constantly running into the byeroads to see if there is not something for you to People take up some work, then, as the do there. novelty diminishes, their zeal lessens, and they change it for a newer sphere; then tire of that and seek another. They are workers on whom we cannot rely, because they seldom keep to one thing long. Again, others add to their work fresh plans of usefulness without considering whether it is judicious to do so. Their time is already sufficiently occupied, but they "must go and read to that poor man," or they "must have that blind girl come to them to learn Moon's embossed alphabet;" and so, through trying to do more than they actually can accomplish, all is done imperfectly, or some things have to be given up. So these kind-hearted but not wise people get into sad confusion, and those who are trusting to their co-operation become much

disappointed. Undertake no more than you feel you can do well.

Do not attempt more than health will allow. Health is a talent, and you have no right to misuse it. "It is better to wear out than to rust out," observed some one in the hearing of a well-known clergyman, who replied, "It is still better, to last out."

Be practical. Let your work be real work, not dreams about it. It is quite possible to lie on a green bank in summer, or to sit half dozing by the fire in winter, sketching delightful plans of Christian enterprise, in which you are to exercise much self-denial, overcome extraordinary obstacles, and at last gain magnificent results; and then to indulge a dangerous spirit of self-complacency while you continue to muse over your goodly schemes, never rising to betake yourself to the plain, unromantic drudgery of working them out.

"Fireside philanthropists," some one calls these persons: a not inappropriate name. They mean well, if only they would do well.

Do not resemble them. Do not dream how you could do such and such great things for Christ, if only you were placed in such and such circumstances, while that broth is getting cold which you might carry to your sick neighbour, or even while those stockings which need mending, those preserve jars which are without labels, or Mary waiting for you to hear her geography lesson give you present opportunities of showing a mind intent on being useful.

Remember that great things done for Christ, in

a vain, self-seeking temper, shrink into a miserable dwarfness, while little things done in an humble, loving spirit rise to an incalculable greatness.

Do not say that your labour has been in vain because, as yet, you see no result. "The day shall declare it."

And it is right to look for some tokens of the spiritual harvest even now. God is a sovereign, as the ordinary details of agriculture plainly show; but the scanty harvest or the actual famine is mercifully rare, and is an exception to God's rule of linking careful sowing and joyful reaping. So is it in the spiritual husbandry. God must have all the honour; but we do not give Him honour if we go with our seed-basket and suppose that we are simply scattering the seed within the cerecloths of spiritual mummies, where it will lie for an indescribably long time, though it will never lose its vitality, and eventually may produce a goodly crop.

That may be the case. Doubtless it sometimes is so. But it is not a very attractive picture of spiritual work, and the prospect is not a cheering one.

Let us rather feel that we are sowing beside all waters; we cannot tell which shall prosper, but we will patiently and cheerfully wait for the revolving seasons to bring round the harvest.

The "due season" and the "reaping" are not necessarily in eternity. The "many days" when the "bread upon the waters" ripened to a harvest were a tolerably definite time, not a vaguely anticipated season. The promises of God's Word represent rather the certainty than the remote futurity of the worker's success.



## CHAPTER XII.

ON TEMPER.

SOME people talk lightly about temper, as if it were not a sin to be passionate or sulky, spiteful or jealous. In the case of a hasty temper, I have known them almost proud of it; at least smilingly defend it, as the sign of a high and generous spirit. They regard it as half a virtue, if not a whole one.

Yet, what says the Bible?

Why, it makes the control of temper essential to the reality of a Christian state. "If any man bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain" (James i. 26).

And it certainly is essential to conformity to Christ's example. He was meek and lowly of heart; when He was reviled He reviled not again; He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; and, as the lamb dumb before the shearers, He bore his sufferings uncomplainingly. If you cannot "for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully," your conduct cannot be acceptable with God; for to this very endurance you have been called (1 Pet. ii. 20, 21).

And I am sure, my dear friend, you desire to resemble Jesus. You wish to be peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated (Jas. iii. 17).

Besides, if you yield to an unsanctified temper, see how much mischief you make. You give a handle to those who are against your changed views and life, and who will only be too ready to reproach you with any inconsistency which they discover. And this inconsistency is one which they will most easily detect, and on which they will fasten as being one which you must yourself confess. You cannot deny that you ought to be gentle, forbearing, and meek. They know something of Christ's character. You profess to follow Him; then you ought to be Christ-like. This is the way they will reason; and rightly; and their reproach will be a keen one when they say to you, after you have given way to temper, "Why, I thought you professed to be a Christian!"

You also place a stumbling-block in the way of those who are inquiring after Christ. They have, perhaps, been struck by the fact of your avowal of discipleship, and, in some anxiety as to their own spiritual state, are studying you to see what difference religion makes in you. Now, if they see you just as hasty, or just as sulky, or just as unforgiving, or just as resentful as you used to be, they can scarcely be blamed if they come to the conclusion that your religion is a matter of feelings and words rather than a thing of practical influence. am sure you could not blame them for thinking so. for the fault of their so thinking would lie at your And so they relapse into indifference again, and, alas! may have their slumber deepened by your outburst of unholy temper.

You should think the more of this, because, as a

young person, your temper is more likely to be tried than if you were older. You are not your own master, and so cannot do as you like. The restraints to which you are unavoidably subject may even be excessive, or, as you may think, unwise and unkind, and you chafe under them. The chafing itself may be natural, but the so yielding to it as to allow it to influence your looks, words, and actions must be regarded by you as sinful. It may be very wrong on the part of those who try you so much, but your duty is to endure.

It is impossible to exaggerate the value of self-control. A meek and quiet spirit in the sight of God is of great price (1 Pet. iii. 4). He that ruleth his spirit is asserted to be greater than he that taketh a city (Prov. xvi. 32). God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace, to the humble (Jas. iv. 6; 1 Pet. v. 5).

Even those who are unable to comprehend the motives which guide you will appreciate their result. The exercise of that charity which beareth all things and is not easily provoked will win the admiration of even an enemy. Here is an illustration of the beauty of a well-disciplined temper.

A rich Hindoo, at Chinsurah, sent one day to the missionaries to inform them that, having a very learned Brahmin on a visit to his house, he should like them to arrange for a friendly argument about the merits of Christianity versus Hindooism. This was agreed to, and the controversy was opened by the Brahmin. He was a cross, ill-tempered man, and spoke, evidently, under the influence of bad feelings. He reviled the mis-

sionaries, and misrepresented their teachings, saying what he knew to be false, and using the most angry language, for the purpose of setting all his friends against the Christians. When his tirade was ended, the missionaries replied. They showed how their religion was full of love; how God loved the world by sending his Son; how that Son loved sinners by dying for them; and how the same feeling of love had caused the missionaries to leave their land, their friends, their home, to teach Hindoos the way of salvation. And all this was spoken with kind looks and tones of affection, very different from the Brahmin's sour aspect and angry words.

Every one marked the difference. The Brahmin felt it himself. His countenance changed. He was not convinced by the missionaries' arguments, but he was struck by their sweet Christian temper. He could not help saying, "I am a Brahmin, and cannot allow that I think the Christian religion superior to mine; but I must allow that the temper of these Christians is superior to that of us Hindoos." And then the Brahmin added, turning to the missionaries, "Gentlemen, your temper is boro prarthoneco"—that is, "greatly to be prayed for."

Let me give you another instance. It is from the Memoirs of the American Roger Sherman, and I have always regarded it, from the peculiar circumstances of the trial, as a remarkable proof of the power of Divine grace.

Roger Sherman, the distinguished judge of Connecticut, was naturally possessed of strong passions; but over these he at length obtained an extraordinary control. He became habitually calm, sedate,

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and self-possessed. One morning he called his family together, as usual, for family prayer. took his seat at the table, and beside him placed one of his children, a little child. The rest of his family, several of them now grown up, were seated round the room, together with some college tutors who were boarders in his house. His aged mother, almost in her second childhood, sat opposite to Mr. Sherman. While he was reading his little child became restless, so he paused and told it to be quiet. But the playful child continued to make a slight disturbance, so the father again reproved it, and this time gave it a gentle tap. This seems to have caught the attention of Mr. Sherman's aged mother. With a great effort she rose from her seat, tottered across the room, and then, coming close to his chair, gave him as severe a blow as she could. "There," said she, "you strike your child, and I will strike mine!" For a moment the blood was seen to rush to his face—remember, he was naturally a very passionate man—then all was mild and calm. He paused, raised his spectacles, cast a look at his mother, and then looked again at his Bible. Not a word escaped him, but he continued his service, and soon after sought in prayer grace to set a worthy example to his household.

Then, besides the value of a well-controlled temper as an evidence of the strength of Christian principle, its value is great as a means of increasing the general happiness. "The difference," says Dr. Todd, "in the happiness which is received or bestowed by the man who guards his temper and that by the man who does not is immense. There

is no misery so constant, so distressing, and so intolerable to others as that of having a disposition which is your master, and which is continually forgetting itself."

But, if temper is one of your failings, you have, probably, been in the habit of making excuses for it. Let me show you how vain any of these excuses are. I keep chiefly in view a hasty temper, because the young are more prone to this than to other manifestations of temper; still I wish my remarks to be applicable to bad temper of any kind.

"I was born so."

But that is no reason why you should remain so. You were born unable to speak, and unacquainted with reading and writing, but you do not consider it proper to be ignorant or dumb. And so if you were born with a bad temper — which possibly is not quite a correct statement—you are not excusable for neglecting to improve it.

"I have been out of health."

Ah, I know how weakness of health enfeebles self-control. But you must still strive against it. A strong man, when weakened by illness, has often been known to shed tears like a child on some very slight provocation, but I never heard that he defended it as a reasonable thing to do.

"Well, I know I am hasty, but it is soon over; I never sulk."

Just as if that were any vindication of a hasty spirit! Why, a thief might as well say he knew he was in the habit of stealing, but it was the affair of a moment, and, besides, he had never committed a murder! No, the abstaining

from one sin does not excuse the commission of another. People often talk in this way; for example, the Pharisee who exulted in his freedom from the sins of the poor Publican; yet the latter, our Saviour adds, went down to his house justified rather than the other.

"They are so tiresome, so provoking, they would try the patience of Job."

This, probably, is on the lips of an elder sister, or of a teacher in a school. But would not Job have borne the petty provocation? What are your trials of temper to his? Read his history more closely before you venture on a comparison between your daily vexations and his tremendous temptation. "You have heard of the patience of Job," but, believe me, a hundredth part of his patience would enable you to bear up under your provocations.

"I never do right; Johnnie may do the same thing and is never scolded. It is unjust!"

To this I give two answers. First, perhaps you are mistaken, and are speaking under the influence of a miserably jealous spirit. Look closely into it, and pray to be shown "what manner of spirit you are of." Secondly, suppose it is, as you say; then the unfair treatment is your cross, given you by Jesus, and you must take it up cheerfully, and bear it meekly after Him. Otherwise, He himself says you cannot be his disciple (Matt. x. 38). Oh, will you refuse that cross? Will you sinfully murmur under it?

"I have been so worried of late with various things, that I am afraid I have become rather snappish."

Ah, that reminds me of an old merchant who used, sometimes, when I visited him in his counting-house, to receive me in a rather brusque manner. He would afterwards apologise for it, and say I must not think anything of it, for he had been so harassed in business that it had made him short and abrupt in manner. Now, do you not think it would have been better to conquer the snappish temper instead of making apologies for it? I think so, and I advise you to do it.

"People do not mind you if you never show temper."

This is a very specious excuse. Much may be said in its favour. An employer among his workmen, or a master in his school, may argue that a sharp and haughty manner is essential for the purpose of securing prompt obedience and thorough service. I do not believe it. I am sure that a hasty, dictatorial manner arouses corresponding emotions in those who are subjected to it; while a soft answer not only turneth away wrath, but turns away many other wrong feelings besides.

"But I was never taught when a little child to restrain my temper, and it is too late now."

No, it is not too late, though the difficulty of doing it is greatly increased if you have been "left to yourself" during past years. No worse injury can be done to a child than to allow him to indulge his passion unchecked, while the early training to habits of self-control is a blessing for which we cannot be too thankful. If it were impossible for you to overcome a temper whose violence is owing to neglect on the part of your

friends, then I might regard you as free from blame. But it is not impossible.

How, then, is temper to be overcome?

The great means is the Holy Spirit's presence within you. It is through his gracious operations that you become conformed to the pattern of Christ. He is the Sanctifier, and you cannot be led and taught by Him without growing in holiness. A holy spirit is essentially a meek and lowly one (Matt. xi. 29). Pray earnestly for His blessed help, and He will strengthen you with all the needed grace.

But you are not to be inactive yourself. You must make a solemn resolve that you will overcome temper. And you must struggle daily with the workings of a corrupt nature within you. Prayerfully and believingly contend, and you shall not contend in vain.

Here are a few rules which some of my young friends have tested and found useful.

- 1. When you are on the point of giving way to irritation, quietly go out of the room. Generally the impetuosity will subside, and you will soon be able to return calmly and kindly.
- 2. Acknowledge your fault to the person to whom you spoke improperly. This will be hard to do, but is likely to be helpful.
- 3. Contemplate the example of Christ. "Consider Him" (Heb. xii. 3).
- 4. Study also the exemplifications of Christian self-control as they will meet you in your intercourse with the Lord's people. "How have you learned to govern your natural hastiness and

temper?" was the inquiry once addressed to a youthful Christian. "I owe it, under God," was the reply, "to the example of a dearly loved friend with whom I resided some months. His beautiful self-control, under the most trying circumstances, excited my admiration, and filled me with shame; and I thought that if he, with even stronger constitutional difficulties to contend with than I have, had learned to put such a restraint upon his feelings, I might surely do the same if I would struggle for it as hard as he had done. And from that time I began to be more prayerful and more watchful over myself."

- 5. When about to speak angrily—if you must speak—do so in a lower key. A good Quaker, remarkable for his mildness of manner, said that he had noticed that people, when they spoke in temper, always spoke in a higher tone of voice, and so he resolved, the moment that his temper was likely to be irritated, to speak in a lower key. He had found it very successful.
- 6. Rejoice in the Lord. Happiness in religion is an excellent safeguard against sinful temper. You are called, as a believer in Jesus, to "inherit a blessing" (r Pet. iii. 9). Notice how the Apostle makes this an argument for not rendering railing for railing." When you have come from some season of precious communion with Jesus, with the glow of that blessed interview still upon your soul, and find youself again amidst the provocations of earthly life, your spiritual joy will be as a sword and as a shield to you.

But do not expect a complete victory at once.

You will often fail in your efforts, but you must still keep on the struggle. It is yours to contend, it is God's to give you the victory; ask and it shall be given you.

- "Thou hast been blest, if never bent
  Thine head in anguish low,
  To hide the trembling lip—the tear,
  That hard words caused to flow;
  Striving in vain to mask the pain
  Veiled by thy silent pride,
  The faint smile of the blanching lip
  That strove the pang to hide.
- "But oh! more blest, if memory brings
  No record of the past,
  Where angry glance and cruel word
  Their withering shadow cast:
  Where no sad eye fell mournfully,
  When on the quivering soul
  Thy bitter words went echoing,
  Like the loud thunder roll.
- "For God's eternal dwelling-place
  Those words went floating by,
  And still the echo wanders on
  Throughout eternity.
  And whispering yet within thine heart
  The still, small voice is heard,
  And thou shalt cry, 'O God, forgive
  My heedless, cruel word!'
- "But there are words that from the fount
  Of life and blessing come,
  Cheering the sorrowing soul with love
  And leading wanderers home.
  O Christ! write Thou thy words of peace
  Upon our hearts, and be
  The guard of each winged messenger
  That upward flies to Thee."



## CHAPTER XIII.

ON TEMPTATIONS-THEIR NATURE.

HATEVER tends to lead you away from Christ and from obedience, you may call a temptation.

It is a sin to yield to such a leading, but it is not a sin to be conscious of the leading. You cannot help the temptation presenting itself; nor can you help feeling that there is power in it to draw you astray. But temptation resisted recoils on the tempter.

Still you may sin, not only by giving way to the temptation, but by cherishing the idea of it in your mind. Let me illustrate this.

Suppose you are starving, and standing outside a baker's shop filled with bread. Some one whispers, "Steal a loaf." You are hungry; you would like some bread; therein lies the strength of the temptation. If you had just eaten a hearty dinner, you would not *feel* the influence of the evil advice; but, being so hungry, of course you do feel it. You are not sinning by feeling it. You reject the wicked suggestion, and go away a conqueror over it.

But suppose, instead of going away, you continue to look through the shop window, and wish for some of the bread there, and think over the advice which has been given you: then you are sinning, even though you have not stolen a loaf.

Why? Because you are parleying with the temptation, cherishing it, and allowing its influence over your mind to grow stronger. The result of this, probably, will be your creeping into the shop and stealing a loaf.

It was so with Eve. She continued to listen to the serpent, and she allowed her eyes to look on the attractive fruit and her heart to muse on the advantage of eating it. She was thus making it almost impossible for her to resist the tempter. It was almost an inevitable consequence that she should pluck the forbidden fruit. Her safety lay in immediate flight from the presence of the serpent.

But when we are tempted, is it always by some evil spirit, as the serpent in Eden tempted Eve?

Not always. The Apostle James tells us that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." There is so much evil in our hearts that we become tempters to ourselves. The ninth article of our Church teaches us that we are of our "own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always against the Spirit," and that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea in them that are regenerated."

The holiest and most advanced believers have acknowledged the truth of this. Bradford, the eminent martyr, said, "O Lord! sometimes methinks I feel it so with me as if there were no difference between my heart and the wicked. I have as blind a mind as they; as stout, stubborn, rebellious and hard heart as they."

And if you look at the journal of Henry Martyn—the beloved missionary to India, so earnest in his piety—you may read these words: "What a dark, atheistical state do I live in! Alas that this creation should so engross my mind, and the Author of it be so slightly and coldly regarded! Amazing patience! He bears with this faithless, foolish heart!"

Now these were holy men, loving Jesus, and willing to suffer and die for Him. But they felt very strongly that their nature was depraved, and that in them dwelt no good thing, except as grace had put it there (Rom. vii. 18); and it troubled them that there should be so much natural inclination to sin.

It is this natural inclination which makes temptations for us. We have a natural bias towards the wrong path. If you were to see people playing at bowls, you might wonder why it was so difficult to roll those great wooden balls in a straight line. And if you tried to bowl one of them along perfectly straight, you would be surprised to find it would not go straight. How is this? you would ask. The answer would be, "There is a concealed bias; one side is made heavier than the other. If you want to make it go straight, you must overcome this bias." Just so it is with you. Your nature has a bias to what is evil, and it will be hard work for you to overcome it. You will always be self-tempted to go in a wrong path.

I proceed to exemplify this self-temptation.

Suppose a friend has found fault with you, unreasonably and angrily. There are two things you

may do. You may quietly and kindly expostulate, or you may go away and brood over the insult. Your brooding will take some such shape as this:—

"How false! I never did anything of the kind. Besides, anybody who knows me knows that I would never stoop to do a mean trick. I have too much pride for that. But he said I did, and he will go away and tell other people I did, and perhaps they will believe it. Besides, why should he be in such a temper about it? He gave me no time to explain, and if I had tried to do so, I am sure he would not have listened to me. Not that I would have condescended to explain to him. No, indeed: let him think what he likes. And, just as if he had any right to reprove me—so much younger as he It was quite impertinent. And after I have shown him so many favours, too. Why he owes a good deal to me, and that might have kept him quiet. Well, I shall not be very civil to him in a hurry. He shall see I am not one of those who lie down to be trampled upon," &c., &c.

We cannot pretend to give the whole train of unwise reflection, but this may suffice. You can easily see how, by this brooding over a real or fancied injury, its importance is magnified till the first ruffled feeling deepens into a bitter spirit of enmity against the offender.

But who has tempted you to indulge this enmity? Your own heart. Your own heart, through its brooding over your friend's fault. Then that brooding is a sin, and you are responsible for allowing it. You have *made* the temptation.

Circumstances also may furnish a temptation, by

rendering it inconvenient or dangerous to act conscientiously. For example, an irreligious person may share your bedroom, and it may be inconvenient to you to be watched while you read a chapter and kneel in prayer, and so you may feel tempted to abandon the practice for a time.

Of course, if you are wise, you will avoid such circumstances as appear likely to furnish temptations. But sometimes it is impossible to do this. Things not under your control may place you where it will be difficult to preserve Christian consistency. Daniel could not help coming under the operation of the royal edict against private prayer, and there was in that circumstance a strong temptation to postpone his daily devotions till the thirty days had expired.

The temptation arising from circumstances will be all the stronger if there are reasons which seem partly to justify it. A shopkeeper defends his Sunday trading on the ground that he cannot otherwise provide for his family. Saul of Tarsus was tempted to the indulgence of a persecuting spirit by the idea of doing God service. He thought that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts xxvi. 9). Another Saul was tempted by circumstances to invade the priest's office; he said he acted from a pious motive and that he felt *forced* to do it (1 Sam. xiii. 12). Remember that if a thing is clearly sinful, the expediency of doing it does not excuse its guilt.

Temptations may also come from your companions and friends. If they are not interested in religion themselves, they are likely to try to persuade you to give up your religious notions. If they cannot deter you by a frown, they will endeavour to beguile you by a smile. They will talk so winningly about "the pleasures of the world" that you will be in danger of returning to them, as Demas did (2 Tim. iv. 10). "Just for this once" has ruined many a soul.

Even Christian friends may sometimes become tempters. "Master, spare Thyself," said Peter, and was sternly rebuked, as speaking with an adversary's voice, not a friend's (Matt. xvi. 23). Some may tell you you are too religious for the mood to last; that you will soon cool down, and become an average disciple. They may say, "Ah, we were like you at first, so loving, so eager, so full of zeal. Every meal was a sacrament. But, of course, it did not last. We toned down to a more every-day sort of piety, and so will you. It is a kind of first love with you now, but it won't be always so."

I know such things are said, and even by good people who ought to know better. I can scarcely restrain my indignation as I think of the spiritual injury they may do to some earnest but young disciple. If your heart is full of ardent love to Jesus, it is not a thing of course that you should "cool down." You may do so; you will be tempted to do so, even till you get as cold as a tombstone in yonder churchyard. But this is not unavoidable, nor is it excusable. Read how solemnly a church was addressed which had left its "first love" (Rev. ii. 4), and how lukewarmness in religion was denounced as a great sin in another church (Rev. iii. 16). Oh, my dear reader, do not regard your

present experience of the spiritual life as a period of religious ecstacy, out of which you are to pass into a routine of Christian duty which, though sincere, shall be unimpassioned and slow. No, rather regard it as an experience which shall not lose its fervour while it gains in depth, but which shall keep burning the fire on the heart's altar by constant musings on the things of Christ. Why, if yours is the "path of the just," which "shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day," is it likely you should become colder as you walk along that path?

And are not all the metaphors which are used to describe the Christian life such as bring before us the ideas of constant, unremitting effort? Is the soldier to relax his watchfulness and to lessen his endurance because it is some years since he enlisted? Is the runner to diminish his speed as he draws nearer the goal? Is the athlete to fight as one that beateth the air, because he has shown prowess in previous conflicts? Is the pilgrim to lose his joyousness, is his faith to dim its perceptions the nearer he approaches his home in the Better Land?

No, a thousand times no. Resist steadily such an insinuation. It is one which dishonours the character and work of Christ and the operations of the Holy Spirit within your soul. Resolve, in dependence upon that Spirit's aid, to aim constantly at a high standard of Christian life; forget things behind, press forward to things before, and let your motto be, "Going on unto perfection" (Heb. vi. 1).

A temptation may sometimes present itself in the shape of religious advice kindly but mistakenly given you. You have every reason to listen meekly to the counsels of those who are older than you in Christian experience, and I should deeply regret it if I thought that you could so misunderstand these remarks as to make them the means of fostering an independent or conceited temper within you; yet, at the same time, I must say that the Holy Spirit is your only infallible guide, and that fellow-pilgrims, the holiest and the wisest of them, may err in directing you. Take a page from Bunyan's Allegory in illustration of this.

"Now a little before them, there was on the left hand of the road a meadow, and a stile to go over into it, and the meadow is called By-path meadow. Then said Christian to his fellow, 'If this meadow lieth along by the way-side, let's go over it.' Then he went to the stile to see, and behold a path lay along by the way on the other side of the fence. 'It is according to my wish,' said Christian, 'here is the easiest going; come, good Hopeful, and let us go over.' 'But,' said Hopeful, 'how if this path should lead us out of the way?' 'That is not likely,' said the other; 'look, doth it not go along by the way-side?' So Hopeful being persuaded, went after him over the stile. When they were gone over, and were got into the path, they found it very easy to their feet."

Yes, very easy, but it led to their captivity in Doubting Castle.

It was Christian, the older and more experienced Pilgrim, who led his companion astray.

But he by no means intended to do so. He meant to keep quite close to the right path, only on

theother side of the hedge, where the road was softer to their weary feet. Hopeful had had some doubts as to the propriety of this, but they naturally yielded before the positive assurances of his elder, and as he believed wiser, friend. We can scarcely censure him very strongly; yet he might have said to himself, "Any counsel must be wrong which takes me a single step out of the King's Highway." And, saying this, he should have quietly acted upon it.

If, then, such a temptation come to you, remember you are responsible for the exercise of a "right judgment;" and if you ask for grace to form it, that grace shall not be withheld.

And especially if, as in the case of Hopeful, the temptation is a suggestion how to avoid a cross. You need not, then, be under any hesitation as to your duty. If God calls you to walk in a rough path, you have no right to forsake it for another because it seems easier.

For example, if you are just now placed under very trying circumstances, and you have it in your power to change your position, you have no right to do so unless God clearly call you to make the change.

And the mere advice of sympathising friends is not to be construed into this clear call, just because they are older than you. The punishment which fell upon the disobedient prophet (1 Kings xiii. 26) was really a punishment for giving up the exercise of his own judgment.

Do not forget that your "besetting sin" will give temptations a great advantage over you.

Do you understand what I mean by a "besetting sin"?

It is referred to in Heb. xii. 1. Each of us is prone to some particular fault, such as vanity, indolence, &c. Our friends know it, perhaps, better than we do. They could easily tell us what is the chief failing of our character. It conceals itself from us more than from them. Try to discover it, for it is the weak point of the citadel, and the enemy will be sure to plant his assaults chiefly there.

Suppose it is vanity; then temptations which appeal to vanity will take more effect on you than they would upon a lowly-minded person.

Or, suppose you are naturally hasty in temper; then a temptation to be provoked by an unkind remark will be a stronger temptation to you than to a person of a calm, placid disposition.

It must, therefore, be your earnest prayer and endeavour to "lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset you," so that you may not falter nor stumble in the heavenward race.

On the other hand it is remarkable how Christ's disciples have often failed, not only in the weak points, but also in the strongest points of their characters. What was the strongest point in the character of Moses? Certainly his meekness (Num. xii. 3). Yet his failure in this grace lost him the land of Canaan. Abraham is the pattern of believers, on account of his strong faith; yet his faith gave way when he reached Pharaoh's palace (Gen. xii. 12). Observe, also, how the dove-like Apostle John wanted to call down fire from heaven

on the unsocial Samaritans (Luke ix. 54). Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Notice also the variation in the *scale* of temptations.

Some are large, constituting a crisis in the soul's history; it may be a temptation to take some wrong step in life, to join an ungodly partner in business, to make an unscriptural marriage, to unite with the enemies of Christ in some irreligious scheme.

Other temptations are small, and so are likely to be despised. A slight yielding to slothfulness, a little hesitation in obedience, an unkind word, an angry look, a laugh at something sinful, a passing feeling of vanity;—these are trifling temptations.

True, but they serve as an index to character. A straw thrown into the air is a trifling thing, but it shows the direction of the wind. He who shows vanity in little things will make a stronger exhibition of it when some larger temptation presents itself.

And the constant yielding to small temptations will incapacitate the mind for resistance to a great temptation of the same kind. No man ever became a great thief all at once. A long series of petty acts of dishonesty, if successful and undetected, will be sure to culminate in some greater and bolder transgression, such as will probably lead to exposure and punishment.

So that your yielding to a small temptation is a guide to what your conduct will be under a greater one. If Peter's boastful spirit fails when he sees the wind boisterous, it is still more likely to fail

when he is questioned about his discipleship in the palace of the high priest. He that is unfaithful in little things will prove unfaithful in great things (Luke xvi. 10). Show me how you act in "the land of peace," and I will tell you what you will do in "the swelling of Jordan" (Jer. xii. 5).

- "Thou, who didst for Peter's faith,
  Kindly condescend to pray:
  Thou, whose loving-kindness hath
  Kept me to the present day;
  Gracious Saviour,
  Still direct my devious way!
- "When a tempting world in view
  Gains upon my yielding heart,
  When its pleasures I pursue,
  Then one look of pity dart:
  Give me pleasures
  Which the world can ne'er impart.
- "Then, if heavenly dews distil,
  If my hopes are bright and clear,
  If sweet peace my spirit fill,
  Temper joy with holy fear;
  Keep me watchful,
  Safe alone when Thou art near.
- "Weak I am, and prone to fall,
  And temptations round me throng;
  Listen to mine earnest call;
  Succour me and make me strong;
  And for ever
  I will praise Thee in my song."



## CHAPTER XIV.

## ON TEMPTATIONS-THEIR AGENT.

I F a heap of gold lay before you on the table, you might feel only slightly tempted by the sight of it; but if some one stood whispering at your ear, and employing most persuasive arguments to induce you to steal it, you see how much stronger the temptation would become.

And it is a terrible fact that such a tempter often approaches you. You cannot hear his stealthy step. You cannot see his malign countenance. He employs no audible voice when he talks to you. Yet he can and does hold converse with your spirit. In some mysterious manner, which we cannot explain, he is able to bring the influence of his mind to bear upon your mind. He cannot force you to be guided by his advice, but he can employ skill and artifice to persuade you to listen to his counsel. In the sixth verse of Jude's Epistle certain spirits are spoken of who are fallen from the bliss of heaven, and there is every reason to believe that these are the spirits that exercise temptation in the world. They appear to be under the control of a being called in Scripture the Devil and Satan, both words having the meaning of enemy or adversary. He is described as a powerful, watchful, and cruel foe. He is a roaring lion prowling in search of prey (I Peter v. 8). We are to arm ourselves against his "wiles," and to wrestle against his "powers" and "rulers" (Eph. vi. II, I2). He blinds his victims (2 Cor. iv. 4), and then easily leads them captive (2 Tim. ii. 26). We read of his "devices," his "depths," and of his "deceiving the nations" (2 Cor. ii. II; Rev. ii. 24; xx. 3).

The arts of such a spirit, perfected by the practice of six thousand years, must be subtle and innumerable. How difficult it will be to contend with him!

Yet the contest is necessary.

Consider his design. Nothing less than the destruction of your soul! He is jealous of your happiness, for he has lost his own. He is jealous of you as the new creation of the Saviour's grace, and wishes to mar that Divine work, for he hates God. If anything could give him joy, it would be the sight of your soul dragged down to share his ruin and misery.

You will, I am sure, desire some counsels about this spiritual conflict. It is not enough that I bring you the Apostle's command, "Resist the devil" (Jas. iv. 7); you want to be told how you are to resist him.

First, then, notice the principal seasons of his temptations.

One of these I have already mentioned (p. 47) as the moment of your entrance upon the way of the Cross. Will you read again what I have there stated?

Another is, when some earthly humiliation has

been experienced. Then the mind is chafed and the heart is sore, under the sense of life's mortifications, and the disciple's spirit, owing to the workings of a corrupt nature, is in dangerous sympathy with the Tempter's insinuations and evil counsels.

Another season is just after some special experience of spiritual joy. It was so with our Saviour. The heavens had opened, the Spirit descended, the Father's voice of love had spoken, "THEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. iv. 1). was a daring thing," says the Rev. James Vaughan, "for Satan to choose such a moment for his attack. But it was what he always does. Wherever God seems to be taking the most glory, there is Satan trying to rob Him of part. After seasons of brightness, of joy, of holiness will be the times of greatest temptation. If there is a time when Satan is busy, it is when a man is passing away with some demonstration of God's love. Be the most on your guard when you feel any degree of elevation or joy."

Or, if poverty come suddenly to you, Satan will be certain to come too. I was once asked to visit a lady who had just suffered a sad reverse of fortune. From affluence to penury, from a splendid mansion to a single room, she was forced to pass by the fraud of some pretended friend. I found her in misery, but hard, and cold, and rebellious under it. Satan had gained a victory over her spirit, for she was "charging God foolishly," and my sympathy and counsel failed to check the murmurings to which it shocked me to listen. It was a time of triumph for the Evil One.

The very piety of the believer may at such a time be used by the adversary as a snare. He may say to him, "Now you will be quite unable to manifest your religious zeal. You can now do nothing. Your strength is to sit still. You are perfectly useless in your Redeemer's cause. You would do much; you would manifest the deep workings of your love towards Him, but you have no opportunities now. Your means are limited, your sphere contracted, your influence gone. Jesus evidently does not care about your service, since He deprives you of the power to render any to Him. He permits the worldly to retain their misused wealth, but you, who employed your riches for his glory, are stripped of all your resources."

But if poverty is a special opportunity for Satan's temptations, so also is wealth. It is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom (Matt. xix. 24). Many snares surround the path of the affluent (I Tim. vi. 9). What a pleasant voice it is which says to him, "Thou hast many goods laid up in store, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke xii. 19).

If you, my dear friend, are rich, remember that riches are talents, to be employed, like other talents, in the Master's service; but take heed how you trust in them, how you permit their possession to give you a self-complacent feeling, or to make you proud and arrogant. Do not press forward to the best seat because you wear "goodly apparel and a gold ring" (James ii. 2). The Evil One is watching you with eagerness; he will gladly give you still more than you already possess, if only he may steal

the homage of your heart away from God (Matt. iv. 9).

Let me here say to young and enterprising persons: You are not wrong in wishing to succeed in your earthly schemes; not wrong to want to gain riches, renown, influence, friends; but ever keep in mind that no dear friend desires your advancement more than Satan does, or will rejoice in it more when you have achieved it than Satan will rejoice!

And he may even help you in your enterprise. He who was permitted to deprive Job of all his possessions, may, on the contrary, be allowed to bestow affluence on those whom he seeks to He is the "god of this world," and victimize. what he said to Iesus may be true, that earthly riches and honours are committed to him that he may use them as temptations, which God will graciously overrule for the discipline of his children. If he finds that the disciple, when, like his Saviour, led into the wilderness, preserves his faith and holiness amidst danger, hunger, and solitude, he is likely to remove him to the high mountain. and then, showing him the bewitching scenes of earthly glory, to whisper gently in his ears, "All these things will I give thee." He will only suggest. as a condition, some slight compromise, some recognition of a worldly power, some bowing down which is not to God.

These, then, are the special times when the Tempter may be expected to assault your faith. He may seize any moment, especially any moment when he fancies you are off your guard; but he chiefly employs the seasons already named for the purpose of tempting.

He will not always show himself to you. His evil whisper may sound just as the echo of your own thought; and in truth it is very likely to be the echo, only you will fancy that both thought and echo are your own. Besides, it is always difficult to settle whether a temptation does proceed directly from your own heart of unbelief, or is suggested to you by the Adversary.

Or, if you feel you are in the presence of the Tempter, you may only see him under the semblance of a bright and glorious angel, and you may say, Surely nothing evil can lurk under so goodly a form! "An angel of light" cannot counsel deeds of darkness. So that, if the temptation have the guise of a holy duty, if it bear the aspect of a deep spirituality, and if yielding to it seems to promise to bring your soul very near the gate of heaven, oh, how easily may you become its prey, how much light as well as grace will you need to see its falsity and guilt!

So to some anxious hearts and burdened consciences has Satan come and said, "If you want peace, you must deny self, and take up the Cross; and you can only do this thoroughly by sacrificing your human feelings and affections on God's altar, and by forsaking the ordinary pursuits of life. You must withdraw from the world, wear sackcloth, subject yourself, body and mind, to austere rules, break off all earthly ties, and devote your time to prayer, meditation, holy rapture. Then you shall see visions of celestial love and grace; you shall breathe

heavenly air, and the joys of a sacred Elysium shall be your rich endowment."

This is specious, but very false.

You are to exercise self-denial, but not for the purpose of gaining peace. Peace has been made for you, so that it is both foolish and presumptuous to think of making it for yourself. It is because Christ is your peace, and has given you Himself, that you are to live a self-denying life.

But, in the cloud of fine spiritual phrases with which Satan may wrap up his temptation, you may not easily detect its true meaning and design. Beware of all books, sermons, and conversations which are misty and uncertain in their utterances. The way to heaven is narrow but plain, and the Gospel is a plain and straightforward thing. When you test a sovereign by ringing it on a table, you tell its worth by its metallic sound. Test, then, all religious teachings; listen warily to the sound they give. Is it the true Gospel ring? When God opens your spiritual ear you will learn to detect the false sound of what may closely resemble the genuine gold of the sanctuary.

Satan succeeds most by his flatteries. He likes you to have a good opinion of yourself. He will take care to minister to it. A celebrated preacher was congratulated, after one of his sermons, on its cleverness. "Ah," he replied, "Satan has told me so already."

But the Tempter does not always flatter; sometimes he alarms.

He alarms by a reference to the perils of discipleship.

Or by reminding of past sins, and alleging their

number and guilt to be beyond the reach of forgiveness, for the purpose of keeping the soul from going to Jesus for pardon.

Or he insinuates, as he did to Jesus, a doubt of the believer's acceptance. "If Thou be the Son of God."

Or he brings wicked ideas before the mind, and tries to persuade the believer that they are his own thoughts and wishes; which is just as if you were looking at a picture, and its painter were to try to persuade you that you had painted it yourself.

I do not think it desirable to dwell upon this form of Satan's temptations, but as it may mark the experience of some of my readers, let me refer them to the touching Memoir of Fanny Bickersteth, where they will find an account of her deep mental distress, "impossible to describe except as bewilderment, confusion, and horror, sights and sounds over which she had no control mingling with every attempt at mental and devotional exercise, and forcing themselves upon her when a wearied mind and body craved rest and sleep. She could not divest herself of the impression that a state of mental darkness which so sensibly interfered with her wonted seasons of prayer, and her conscious enjoyment of her Father's presence, must be in its own nature sinful."

This dear child was greatly comforted by the visits of a Christian friend, whose tenderness and sympathy seemed to those around her a special gift of God; and on one of her cloudy and dark days, "when suffering had known no intermission, and the light of her Heavenly Father's countenance

seemed veiled in impenetrable gloom, this kind friend stood beside her, and repeated, with deliberate emphasis, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail thee not.' 'Who spoke to me?' she said; 'was it an angel's voice?' So direct and sensible was the comfort that the words seemed as if reinspired for her, and long after he had left her the echo of his message lingered in her ears."

There are four ways of meeting the assaults of Satan, and successfully repelling his fiery darts.

One way is that of Bible truth. It was thus that our Saviour, in his memorable temptation, overcame. "It is written" drove Satan then from the field of conflict. "It is written" will ever prove a good weapon in the believer's hand. The word of Christ indwelling richly is an inexhaustible armoury, containing resources for every season and order of spiritual warfare. You see what a single quotation did for dear Fanny Bickersteth. May it do as much for you when you need its help!

Observe, then, the importance of having your memory well stored with Scripture texts. Endeavour to become a "scribe, well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom."

Another defence is that of Faith. The faith which takes hold of Christ as the Saviour of a guilty and lost sinner will be your best shield against Satan's artillery.

Another means of protection may be found in Love. When your heart's affections are set on Christ, difficulties will not frighten you from taking up your cross and following Him. When the love of Christ is powerfully shed abroad in your heart, the seductions of the world will appear vapid and contemptible.

Your desires after holiness will also aid you. The work of sanctification, carried on by the Holy Spirit, will, as it advances, gradually diminish your sympathy with sin. You will shrink with a holy horror from even the "appearance of evil." In the hour of temptation you will say, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Do not forget prayer; prayer at all times of temptation; prayer, especially, under very sore trial. You may sometimes be so much perplexed and distressed by a temptation as not to know how to meet it. You cannot talk about it to Christian friends. You cannot find—or you imagine you cannot find—any Scripture promise to strengthen your endurance. No spiritual remedy seems within your reach. You can do nothing but pray. But you can do that. And that was what Jesus did in a season of deep, unutterable woe. And as He was heard, so will you be. Do not doubt this. Help will surely come.

And now let me mention a few things which may serve as cordials for the fainting spirit.

The very fact that it is no trifling conflict in which you are engaged when you resist temptation is one suggestive of comfort. The everlasting welfare of your soul is at stake. Issues of life or death which no human arithmetic can calculate depend upon your struggle with evil. This thought should not depress or daunt you; rather it should rouse

you to firmer resolve and sterner effort. You mean to win Christ, to lay hold on eternal life, while the world, the flesh, and the devil are leagued to prevent you. You are summoned to the loftiest feat of moral heroism. Let, then, the greatness of the conflict nerve you for it. It is a grand struggle.

It is encouraging to infer, from the presence of temptation, that Satan thinks it needful to attack you. You are not now his blind, helpless captive, or he would let you alone. You cannot belong to him now, or "his goods would be in peace" (Luke xi. 21). If he desires to sift you as he did Peter, it must be because he regards you as "wheat;" he would not want to sift chaff (Luke xxii. 31).

Do not forget that his power is limited. He can give a sharp guess at your character, he may suspect your thoughts and feelings, but he is not omniscient. I do not believe he can read your heart, though, from your words and actions, he may form an opinion respecting its state. He evidently did not thoroughly know Christ, or the hopelessness of a contest with one who was perfectly guileless and pure would have kept him from attempting it. He may see so much inconsistency in your Christian practice as to give him hopes of easily ensnaring you, but he does not see how deep in the recesses of your heart there is a fount of true affection for Jesus, which the Saviour's touch shall unseal in the hour of temptation.

But God is greater than your heart, and if He is on your side, you have his omniscience to guard, arrayed against Satan's partial knowledge to tempt. Satan seldom can do much against a meek and humble spirit. It is the meek and lowly who have rest in their souls (Matt. xi. 29); while a haughty spirit precedes a fall (Prov. xvi 18). If you "refrain your soul and keep it low," it will be difficult for the Tempter to find a vantage-ground for his assault.

God has a gracious design in permitting you to be subject to temptation. It is a time of winnowing; good and bad principles are separated; you will know your own heart better, realise more your need of the atoning blood, and the preciousness of the sympathy of Jesus. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" Jas. i. 12).

You have the example of Jesus to animate you. He was tempted, and He overcame, and He says to you, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome."

You also have His intercession. He is praying for you that your faith fail not (Luke xxii. 32).

You have His promise of a reward. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" (Rev. iii. 5).

It is proper that I should add that the experience of believers in reference to temptation varies much. Some are more severely and constantly tempted than others.

Difference of temperament may partly account for this.

Also, the importance of a believer's position may lead to Satan's assaulting him more fiercely. To ruin an eminently holy, useful, and honoured saint might seem of greater consequence than to lead an obscure disciple astray.

Some disciples are naturally so feeble-minded and desponding that God, in his tenderness for them, does not permit Satan to tempt them often.

- "Christian soldier! take thine armour,
  Wield the sword, and grasp the shield;
  And throughout thine arduous conflict
  Never to temptation yield;
  Strong in Jesus, onwards go:
  He has conquered every foe;
  Trust in Him, and thou shalt be
  One with Him in victory.
- "Not the mimic strife of children,
  Not an easy task is thine;
  Thou must meet a skilled assailant,
  Keen in practice and design;
  Art thou faint, has hope grown dim?
  Look to Jesus, lean on Him.
  He will nerve thy drooping arm,
  He will banish each alarm.
- "Lift thy banner, Christian soldier!
  Falter not, nor be dismayed;
  Follow in thy Captain's footsteps,
  All dependent on his aid;
  And, though sore beset by sin,
  Glorious triumphs thou shalt win;
  Soon shalt lay thine armour down,
  For the palm-branch and the crown."



## CHAPTER XV.

## THE SORROWFUL WAY.

THE Via Dolorosa is a street in Jerusalem, running from east to west, and it is so called because tradition points it out as the way by which our Blessed Redeemer, bearing his cross, was led to Calvary.

The disciple's experience resembles his Master's. There is a Sorrowful Way in the pilgrimage of every believer in Jesus.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone, Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown. No traveller ever reached that blest abode Who found not thorns and briers in his road."

Along this Way you will have to walk. "Through much 'tribulation," said Paul at Antioch, "we must enter into the kingdom" (Acts xiv. 22).

Though young in years, you are not too young to know something of trial and sorrow. If you are not yet called to bear so heavy a cross as you see some older disciple carry, yet the shadow of his cross may fall on your pathway and diminish its brightness. You may suffer in seeing others suffer.

And there are trials so common that I may easily regard them as likely to be appointed for you. You may have a reverse in fortune, be laid upon a sick bed, or be called to mourn over the loss of beloved

friends. Some early disappointment of bright prospects may bring a cloud over your landscape; a brilliant career may be checked, a dream of happiness be dispelled; and thus, as Miss Elliott says,

"Life's sorrows those bright places fill Where shone joy's sunniest ray."

And, moreover, though we commonly regard early life as a time of gladness which is unfettered by care and anxiety, and, on the whole, do so rightly, yet we must not say this without some qualifying words. Young people have their troubles, as well as older people. The natural elasticity of youth may, happily, allow them to shake them off more quickly than they will be able to do in afterlife, but they feel them while they last, and feel them acutely. With some young persons of a peculiar temperament they last a long time, and are in danger of embittering their spirit and producing a permanent gloom.

Yours may be the trial of an undue sensitiveness of feeling. Like the mimosa, you are shrinkingly conscious of the slightest painful touch. In Rio Janeiro the shaking of the ground at a distance under a horse's feet has been known to agitate a whole group of mimosas, and force them to close their leaves. Now, in this busy world there must be many of these unintentional shocks, and you will often suffer acutely if your feelings are so easily aroused. A careless word will wound you deeply long after the speaker has forgotten his remark.

You know you ought not to take things so much to heart; but you do, and it really seems as if you could not help it. You are cleverer, perhaps, than the mimosa, and do not show how much your sensitiveness has been touched, but you suffer in secret, and all the more that it is in secret.

Or, perhaps, you do show it, and then your friends wonder that you should be so soon hurt, and think you must be very weak-minded, while they often make matters worse by clumsy efforts to mend them.

I have regarded this sensitiveness as a constitutional infirmity, and as an appointed means of spiritual discipline. Yet it may not always be such; for the habitual yielding of our minds to self-esteem may *produce* an over-sensitiveness, and then the feeling becomes, not an affliction, to be meekly borne or prayerfully striven with, but a sin which must be repented of and destroyed.

So that it is quite possible that, instead of saying, "It is my nature to feel things too acutely," you ought to say, "It is my habit to do so." We are not responsible for our nature, but we are for our habits.

Still, for the purpose of this chapter, I confine myself to the consideration of this sensitiveness as an affliction which a Father's hand has laid upon you for the trial of your faith and love. "You may know little of what the world calls trial," wrote Hetty Bowman, herself a constant sufferer, "little of sorrow in its outward and tangible shape: this you think would be easier to bear. But you are weighed down by a succession of little fretting annoyances which most effectually destroy your peace and comfort. Nominally, at least, they are little; many would scarcely consider them warth a mo-

ment's notice; but to you they are real, all the more so because you must bear them alone. A word, a look, even the tone of a voice is sufficient to bring the hot tears to your eyes, and to send a sickening pang to your heart, which amounts almost to physical pain. Life seems for the time so cheerless, so 'cold, and dark, and dreary,' that, were it not for the sinfulness of the thought, you would almost exclaim, with Tennyson's Mariana:

# "'I'm aweary, I'm aweary, And I would that I were dead."

Another and frequent trouble which befalls the young is the being misunderstood by older friends. This arises, sometimes, from a want of congeniality between them and those with whom they live. A quiet, prosaic person is scarcely fitted to comprehend the exercises of an impulsive spirit, with its ecstatic soarings and its gloomy depressions, its passions and its penitences. Martha, busied in the preparations of her various dishes, misunderstood her sister, and mistook her devoutness for an indolent selfishness, leaving her "to serve alone."

Or the misunderstanding may result from a cold and repelling harshness, which checks the easy development of a young person's character. A bud just about to open may have its unfolding much retarded by the return of an unexpected frost. There are people—good people too—who exhale so frosty an air that it must be a very courageous bud indeed which would venture to lay open its petals to their inspection.

There are also people so undiscriminating, so deficient in tact, as to fail altogether in their

attempts to discern character. Now a safe may be so well constructed as to defy the most desperate force which the burglar can exert, yet it opens easily to its owner's key. Some people never find the key, and so they go on making absurd guesses at what is within, or trying to force an entrance which never will be yielded. By such persons we must expect often to be misunderstood.

And then you never can expect to be understood by those who are strangers to your Christian faith and hope. If they have no sympathy with Jesus, they will have no sympathy with you as his follower. Spiritual things require a spiritual discernment (1 Cor. ii. 14). They will call your Christian consistency uncharitable strictness, your zeal for Christ foolish enthusiasm, your separation from the world a mistaken puritanism. And with their want of spiritual light they must so misjudge you. They can no more interpret the true design of your Christian life than a man at midnight, holding a candle to a sun-dial, could tell the right time by its means.

But this being misunderstood may not altogether be the fault of those around you; the fault may lie with yourself. Perhaps you are naturally reserved, and cannot easily take anyone into your confidence. Or, perhaps, through your youth and inexperience, you have a confused and imperfect way of expressing your opinions or of giving explanations of your motives and conduct. Or you may withhold a necessary explanation. Somebody may have blamed you when you could easily explain and show you were not deserving of censure,

but pride has closed your lips, and you have chosen to remain under a mistaken accusation, saying, with a sort of martyr-feeling, "I suppose I am always to be misunderstood." Evidently, in such a case as this, the sorrow is of your own making.

It will be a duty, therefore, before you regard this kind of sorrow as one which God Himself has sent, to examine closely into it, so as to ascertain whether you should trace it to any failing on your part, or whether you may regard it as the cup which your Father hath given you to drink.

I am sure of this, that it is a great trouble to many young persons. They have told me how it has caused them much distress of mind; how it has given them a craving for sympathy which it seemed they were never to obtain; and they have also told me of the sweet solace and great delight which they have felt when they met with a Christian friend able to enter into their feelings and to understand them. Heart has then answered to heart, as in a mirror a man's face answers to itself.

It must be a special sorrow to young persons to suffer from delicate health. Youth is the season of desire and hope, of earnest resolve and vigorous enterprise; and to find the power of enjoying life in its brightest days greatly diminished, or the opportunity of working for the Saviour very narrowly circumscribed, must become a trial needing much grace to bear. To lie on a sickbed and see other young people, radiant with health and buoyant in spirit; come in and stand by you while they talk of their outdoor work or pleasures, must be an exercise of patience and faith.

Or, if able to move about, yet obliged to be so-careful of health that only on certain days may you go out, and only very slight exertions in the Saviour's service may you make; or to be refused permission to devote yourself to missionary work abroad because of weak health, even though willing to sacrifice that health for the joy of a year or two of missionary labour, as a dear friend of mine was, who scarcely reached a distant shore before God called him, not to labour, but to rest;—oh! I am sure that this must be a great grief. A great grief to any ardent spirit, but especially to one who is youthful as well as ardent.

Another of those trials to which the young are specially liable is that of disappointed earthly friendships. We "make idols and find them clay." In mature life, taught by painful though salutary experience, we do not expect so much from a new friendship, and so are not so much grieved if it fail to answer our expectation; but when we are young we give our hearts fully in exchange, as we believe, for other hearts also as fully given to us. Our early friendships are wonderful things—wonderful in their freshness, their joy, and their trustfulness. Some of them do last, we are thankful to acknowledge, but others melt away like a snowwreath. Is there no sorrow in these early disappointments, or estrangements?

"Oh, there lie such depths of woe
In a young blighted spirit! Manhood rears
A haughty brow, and age has done with tears,
But youth bows down to misery, in amaze
At the dark cloud o'ermantling its fresh days,"

And what shall I say of the first bereavement, the first break in your family circle, your first glimpse of the dark valley of the shadow of death? It may be that God has mercifully kept you as yet a stranger to so sad an experience, and that the loved ones are still at your side around whom your heart has thrown its strong tendrils. Yet it may be otherwise, and that I am now addressing one who has been early called to mourn.

You may have lost a beloved father, the guide and counsellor of your heart and life; or a beloved mother, the loving and tender sympathiser with your every joy and sorrow; or a brother or sister whose affection has been a sunshine in your home: or an intimate friend with whom your intercourse has been the counterpart of David and Jonathan's strong alliance. As you look at the chair where a dear one used to sit, or at the books you once read together, as your fingers rest upon some little hair-locket, or, on opening a drawer, you come upon a faded flower once given you with a loving smile, oh! how the wounded heart throbs with a new pain, and the dark cloud of sorrow comes down and wraps itself around you more closely!

Here, then, are sorrows which may be regarded as especially the sorrows of the young. In afterlife similar trials may recur, but they will not be as poignant nor as unexpected. We may even learn to smile at griefs which once brought ready tears or sleepless nights, but which appear small in the presence of heavier woes.

And now about the burden of grief, whatever that grief may be, which God may give you to bear, I have several things to say to you touching its GENERAL PURPOSE and your DUTY and COMFORT under it.

Only let me first say this, that I must assume that you are now truly a child of God, taught by his Spirit to call Him "Abba, Father." Otherwise, how could I hope to comfort you? Oh! if my little book should come into the hands of one who is in sore distress, in mind, body, or estate, but is a stranger to the covenant of promise, what then can I say? Such a sufferer sees, indeed, the cloud, but can discern no bow radiant upon it. Before him and around him stretches the desert in its solitude and gloom, but for him there is no vision of angels, no divine voice speaking words of peace and joy.

Yet for him the way to the Cross lies open, and One is waiting to be gracious, who will say, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." There can be no comfort for you except as you look for it in Christ. You must be in Him first; then from Him shall come your peace.

And if in the midst of much earthly suffering your heart does obey a gracious influence and turn to Christ in full purpose of penitence and faith, and you resolve to be his for ever, may you then look for the removal of the trial which now so much distresses you? May his child expect a relief from the burden which his enemy might well deserve to carry?

No; we cannot say that you may. It was mercy



which laid that burden upon you, so that its sorrow should lead you to Jesus, and the mercy which brought it may think it wise to retain it for your spiritual advantage.

Besides, suffering is now your privilege. Its presence is the sign of your Father's love. Your change of heart alters the character of your trial. You are now to "count it all joy" when you "fall into divers temptations." Your "acquaintance with grief" is to be a valued intimacy, since thereby you are brought into a closer conformity to Christ, and you thus gain an evidence of adoption; for "whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every one whom He receiveth" (Deut. viii. 5; Heb. xii. 6).

Remember, affliction is not punishment. There is no punishment for God's dear children. It is discipline. You are at school, and affliction is the chief process by which you grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

Remember, also, that there is nothing accidental in your afflictions, nor are they ever wanting in purpose. "You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the *end* of the Lord" (Jas. v. 11). There is some end or purpose, some wise and beautiful design in the smallest grief that vexes your heart for a few minutes, as well as in the bereavement which crushes you to the ground in its intolerable burden of woe.

What, then, is this purpose?

It may be general or special. That is, there is a general purpose, manifold in its wise and loving workings, which all sanctified affliction serves;

and there may also be in each of your trials some special design which fits the trial to you, so that it exactly suits your character or circumstances, and is meant to issue in some particular development of God's grace. I do not intend to speak of this special purpose, because it must vary with each one of my readers, but rather of the general design or purpose on which all the trials of the Christian are made, by Divine grace, to bear.

One part of God's design in affliction is to humble you. He will "hide pride from man," and especially from His children.

It may require a severe affliction to bring down our pride, as in the case of Manasseh, who "humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers," but not till he had been carried a prisoner in chains to Babylon (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12).

And there is an humbling ingredient in every affliction. Look into it carefully, and you will see something of a mortifying character, something lowering to your self-importance or your ambition; so that Hezekiah was quite right in saying, after a season of sore trial, "I shall go softly (i.e., humbly) all my days."

But affliction unsanctified never really humbles; it rather hardens. See the case of Pharaoh. Pray, then, for a blessing upon it.

Affliction also serves to show the evil of sin. Because you are sinful, therefore you are suffering. Not that the particular suffering is always connected with some particular sin, though it may be; but that your experience of suffering is to intensify your realisation of sin in general as an evil and bitter

thing, so that it may come home to your heart and conscience. Elihu, speaking of God's dealings with His people, observes: "If they be bound in fetters and holden in cords of affliction, then He sheweth them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded" (Job xxxvi. 8, 9).

Affliction proves us (Ps. lxvi. 10-12). The journeying of the Israelites in the wilderness tested their spirit of obedience (Deut. viii. 2). In the hour of trial there is a truer revelation of ourselves to ourselves than prosperity would ever allow us to behold. We fancied, once, that it would be easy work to walk on the surface of a troubled sea, if Jesus should bid us come; but when we saw the waves boisterous, our courage not only failed, but we knew it had failed. It is good to have our self-estimate thus sobered.

But while self thus becomes humbled, our sincerity, our faith, and our love are shown to be real things. We may have doubted their existence; we may have feared that our trust in God was not the real, steadfast reliance of his children, that our confidence might be the result of some self-deception; but when we find ourselves, amidst the storms and darkness of life's troubled ocean, clinging to the Rock of Ages, and realising the perfect peace of those whose minds are stayed upon God, then we can rejoicingly say, "I am not ashamed; I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him" (2 Tim. i. 12).

Affliction sanctifies. This is our Father's chief design in it (Heb. xii. 10). The various wheels and tools in the jeweller's shop are meant to effect

one great purpose—the increased beauty and value of his precious stones. The crucible, the furnace, the patient sitting of a refiner, are for one important object, the purification of the silver ore. To reflect the light of heaven as from the polished facets of a diamond, to mirror the divine likeness, as the pure molten silver does the workman's face while he bends over it—this is what God intends affliction should enable you to do. The dross of earthly feelings, the alloy of selfishness must be removed from your soul if your light is so to shine that men may glorify your Father who is in heaven; and for this end your "tribulation worketh" (Rom. v. 3).

Affliction draws out the heart towards God in prayer (Isa. xxvi. 16). Absalom set Joab's field of barley on fire to induce him to come to inquire the reason (2 Sam. xiv. 29-31). So does God send us mysterious trials to awaken a spirit of inquiry within us (Job x. 2). "Is any afflicted, let him pray" (Jas. v. 13).

Affliction, when it has "worked its peaceable fruit of righteousness" in us, enables us to comfort others. As we are not to live for ourselves, so are we not to suffer only for our own profit (2 Cor. i. 4).

At first, indeed—that is, while the affliction "seemeth not joyous but grievous"—we are not likely to get beyond our own self-communings and heart-struggles. It is as much as we can do to wrap our face in our mantle, as Elijah did, in our sad solitude, till that solitude is broken by "the still, small voice" probing deeply into our conscience.

But when the Divine teachings have been humbly and thankfully received, and their lesson well learned, then shall we in patience possess our souls, and the Spirit's true peace shall soothe and hallow our troubled hearts, and so we shall be fitted to go forth as "sons of consolation" to those who are sitting in the darkness of some similar grief.

But afflictions serve a yet higher purpose than that of deepening the spiritual life of the believer: they are for the glory of God (Phil. i. 12, 13). Patience under heavy suffering; the cheerful endurance of appointed trials: the recognition, as in the case of Job, of a Divine hand; the anxiety rather to profit by the sorrow than simply to get rid of it; the joy in God even when all around is distressing; the increased spirituality of life; the unwavering confidence in a happy issue, and the anticipation of the rich compensation of heavenly glory—these are striking proofs of the presence of grace in the sufferer's heart, and of the power of that grace to sustain and cheer. There must be something in a religion which can thus furnish an anchorage for the soul while the waves of sorrow are dashing wildly around it; which can enable a young disciple to lie months and years on a sickcouch with uncomplaining meekness; which can hush the agonising sobs when the heart is wellnigh breaking in some hour of sad bereavement.

Ah, you may sometimes envy the great and good who seem to be achieving such glorious results in working for Christ, whose names are household words among us; you may sigh as you think how little able you are, in your sick-room, to do any-

thing for Jesus. But what said Dr. M'Neile, after he had spent some time in comforting the young but deeply tried daughter of the Rev. E. Bickersteth? "Dear child!" he said, after leaving her room; "there is a spectacle to men and angels carrying on upon that bed. I doubt not she is doing more for the glory of God than many of us in the fore-front of the battle."

And so, afflicted Christian, may you, by your living witness for Christ, be giving Him "true and laudable service." You may awaken serious thought in some careless breast, decide some halting spirit, strengthen some fainting heart, and thus be really at work in His vineyard.

And afflictions also bring special manifestations of the Divine presence and favour. For whom does a mother keep her most tender regard, her most gentle care? Is it not for the weak and sickly child? And so with our Heavenly Father. He is gracious to all, but there are depths in his love and tenderness which you will never know till some season of affliction reveals them to you. "My most painful nights, when I cannot sleep," said a youthful sufferer to me, "never seem long, for I have then such sweet realisations of my Saviour's presence that the hours pass so quickly away."

This was saying much; for you know how long the night usually seems to anyone in great pain.

"Oh! what a God we have to do with!" exclaims another youthful disciple, tried also by much affliction. "What tenderness, sympathy, and wise, unerring love guides his hand in all his dealings

with us! If any one ever had reason to boast of the lovingkindness of the Lord, it surely must be myself. Time would fail me to tell of the great tenderness He has shown towards me; but you may take encouragement from what He has done for me, that you, too, will find Him the same God. He changes not."

Now, as to the way you ought to behave under affliction, let me give you some counsels—some further counsels, I might say, for I have already incidentally shown you something of your duty in this respect.

Remember it is not wrong to feel your troubles deeply. You are intended to feel them. A rod would not be a rod if its strokes were unfelt. discipline has something painful in it. I should be afraid some heavier trial would soon come to you if I saw you careless and unmoved under your present chastening. Job's grief was so profound that his friends who came to console him did not venture to disturb it, but showed a wise tact and a really tender sympathy by sitting down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, "and none spake a word unto him." Yet in the greatness of that grief "Job sinned not." And our blessed Lord, when he wept at the grave of Lazarus, over Jerusalem, and in the garden of Gethsemane, showed the innocence of an agonised sense of woe, and sanctioned its "strong crying and tears." In all this He was without sin.

Only we may so easily, alas! give a sinful turn to our deep sorrow, that I must ask you to be upon your guard here. Sorrow may lead to murmuring. You may be tempted to question the wisdom and doubt the love which thus afflicts you. Hold fast, then, by the many great and precious promises. Pray for a meek and quiet spirit. Realise, by faith, the nearness of Jesus and his readiness to help you. Let your soul return to its rest, fully conscious, even now, that "the Lord is dealing bountifully with you" (Ps. cxvi. 7).

Resign yourself by a distinct act of faith into the hands of your Heavenly Father. Tell Him that you have resolved to surrender body and soul and spirit to his wise disposal. Resolve to have no will but his, and pray for grace to "lie passive in his hands." Christ is your example in this (Matt. xxvi. 42; Heb. x. 7).

Acknowledge God in your trials. Let your friends and companions see that you believe in a Divine ordering of the events of your life, and that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground" (Job v. 6). Let them hear you talk as a *child*, honouring your Father's wisdom and love by an implicit trust, even though his way with you may be one of much mystery.

Do not look beyond your present trial. One step is enough for you. What may be the character of the next step does not concern you now. Sufficient to this day is its evil (Matt. vi. 34). Adelaide Newton well remarked: "The child of God must remember that his Heavenly Father maintains his cause on this wise—'The thing of a day in his day as the matter shall require' (I Kings viii. 59). For every trial He sends, He gives sufficient grace for

its endurance, but He promises no grace to bear anticipations with; and we little know how very large a portion of our mental sufferings arises from anticipation of trial. It is most conspicuous, for example, in Jacob; and in his case the anticipations were in great measure positive waste, things turned out so differently from what he had anticipated."

Endeavour to profit by your afflictions. the rod," it is a wise teacher. Practise its lessons. Your period of seclusion from the world should not be spent only in sorrow, but in much prayer, heartsearching, and study of God's Word. Are you likely to become more thankful, humble, submissive, holy, as the result of God's present dealings with you? Be more anxious for a blessing upon your trial than for its removal. After a heavy shower of rain, when the sun comes out strongly, it is pleasant to walk in our garden. How brightly the rain-drops glisten and add a new charm to the flowers on which they hang! How fresh the air seems, how fragrant the perfume of the passing breeze! The grass is greener; the thirsty ground looks refreshed. So should it be with the garden of your soul. After the outburst of heavy rain, let me hope that the Sun of Righteousness is shining upon you with healing in His wings.

And then, my dear friend, does the parallel still continue? Are you conscious of a fuller, richer, more fragrant Christian life? Are the spices flowing out of your garden since the north wind has blown roughly over it? (Canticles iv. 16.) Can the Beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruits?

Let me now mention some truths which may have a sweet power to comfort you under the pressure of your afflictions.

God knows all. He sees you now as you are bowing your head in grief, or tossing restlessly on a sick-bed, or watching, with an aching heart, in some vigil of love. He knows what your trial is in its peculiar painfulness; knows it as I could not know it, however minutely you should detail it to me—for there are depths in heart-agonies which only Infinite Wisdom can gauge.

And not only does He know it, but He feels it too. Your High Priest is touched with the feeling of your present suffering; there is no feature of it which has not also marked His own trials, except its tinge of sin (Heb. iv. 15). There is comfort in the thought that you have His perfect sympathy.

There is a "needs-be" for your affliction (r Pet. i. 6). A Christian friend, calling upon a poor old woman in Scotland, found her in great pain, and expressed sorrow at seeing her suffer so much. "Oh," said Jeannie, "it's just an answer to prayer. You see I've lang prayed to be conformed to the image of Christ. And since this is the means, I've naething to do wi' the choosin' o' them. That's the end I seek. It's ours to aim at meetness for His presence, and to leave it to His wisdom to take His ain way wi' us. I would rather suffer than sin, ony day."

God has promised to be with you in trouble (Ps. xci. 15).

Moreover, He will not unduly try you (1 Cor. x. 13).

Your case might be worse. Deep as your affliction is, there are disciples yet more deeply tried. Look at the alleviations of your grief, the silver lining to your cloud. God has stayed his rough wind in the day of his east wind (Isa. xxvii. 8).

Besides, your present affliction may be a means, unknown to you, of warding off some yet sharper trial. When the good Bradford, the witness for Christ in popish times, fell down and broke his leg, his enemies taunted him by saying, "Ah, you say all things are for your good, pray is it for your good to break your leg?" He meekly replied, "I see not how it should be at present, but I doubt not it is." Events proved him correct, for his martyrdom was put off for a time, till his leg was better, and in the interval Queen Mary died, and he was released from prison.

Read I Cor. xi. 32, and you will see another blessing connected with God's chastenings.

The consolations which God bestows on his suffering children are large, varied, and strong. His Word is a means of comfort (Ps. cxix. 50). "Ienjoy my Bible," said one shut out of the sanctuary by illness; "and I sometimes enjoy my lonely Sundays very much, and they go quicker than ever. And no wonder, when they are spent in the study of that blessed Word which is the very life of the soul! God can feed us with Himself without either ministers or church, and it is well worth being deprived of the comfort of either or both, to be driven to Him, the fountain of living waters."

The Spirit is also the appointed Comforter. A Christian sufferer said: "I find it a great help,

when tempted to be low in mind, to shut out as much as possible thinking of self in any way, or even of death, but to meditate on Jesus, to remember His presence with me, when I think or speak, lie or sit. Oh, it is sweet thus to enter into Jesus, to delight in Him, to think of His perfections, His love, His humility, His patience! If we ask God's Spirit to give us these sweet, lively, realizing views of Jesus, will He deny us? Is it not His especial office to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us?"

What are your sorrows to Christ's? Is there not solace in the thought that He went through deeper waters and intenser fires than you will ever be called to do? Dark as may be the shadow which falls over your path—ah, even if it be the "valley of the shadow of death" through which you are slowly passing—it was still darker in the Saviour's acquaintance of grief. "Do not put flowers in my coffin," said a dying child, "for Jesus was crowned with thorns." That dear child understood something of the fellowship with Christ's sufferings. Do not shrink from that fellowship, but remember that you are only tasting the cup which he drank to the very dregs. You walk, it is true, along a thorn-strewed road, but He has painfully trodden down the sharpest points of those thorns so as to make the passage smoother for you.

Your present sufferings are essential to your eternal weight of glory, for they are sanctified to its working out. This thought in the Apostle's mind greatly lessened his estimate of the weight of earthly affliction (2 Cor. iv. 17). Then, the heavier

the cross the brighter the crown. "The variety of Christian experiences through which we are permitted to pass on earth will add greatly to the depth of our enjoyment in praising hereafter."

"Sorrow may endure for a night," but it will only be for a night, for a limited and ordained season. Your trial will soon end, your journey soon close, the summons soon reach you, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." The traveller makes light of the discomforts of his journey as he thinks of his nearness to his home. He does not expect in the inn the comforts of his father's house. It is only "for a season" that you are "in heaviness through manifold temptations." When contrasted with eternity, this "season" is "but for a moment."

There will be the rich joys of heaven to compensafe for the sorrows of earth. There will be "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" Psa. xlv. 7; Heb. i. 9). The "oil of joy" was used only for anointing priests and on days of joy. It is symbolical of the Holy Spirit. What Christ has, as Christ, He has for His people. He received the "oil of gladness" that He might give it to the mourners in Zion. They have it in measure now, but they shall have it in its full outpouring hereafter.



### CHAPTER XVI.

#### ON CHURCH ATTENDANCE.

BE early at church, so that you may have a little quiet time for silent prayer and collecting your thoughts in readiness for the public service (Eccles. v. 1, 2).

Guard against wandering thoughts, and, as a means to this, guard against wandering eyes. Let them rest quietly on your book, or, as Herbert counsels, "turn your eyes inwards."

But even with closed eyes there may still be a wandering heart. The captain of a Greenland whaler said to a clergyman, "If I were to go to church it wouldn't do me a bit of good, because, you see, my thoughts would be somewhere else all the time; they would be about my business. The truth is, I have been twenty-one months looking for whales, nothing but whales, and I must get some; and if you could look into my heart, sir, you would see nothing but a whale there!"

Guard, then, against these vain thoughts. They will try to intrude. They will often get in. But watch against them. Strive to banish them. Pray for the power of controlling your thoughts.

Let your part of the liturgy—and do not forget the meaning of the word liturgy, *service*—be done with reverential and prayerful feeling. Make it as much your personal act as you do your prayers in private.

And connect with this the feeling that you are joining in prayer with others. You are not praying alone, or chiefly for yourself; you are uniting in a public confession of faith; you have a fellowship in a "common prayer."

Join in the singing heartily. It is as much a duty to sing as it is to pray. You are not to sing because you have a fine voice, or because it has been well trained, but as an act of grateful adoration. Take care that the singing come from the heart as well as from the lips (Isa.li. 3; Eph. v. 19).

When leaving God's House, avoid joining in gay, trifling conversation. This is undesirable at other times, but especially close to church-doors. The idle comments, the frivolous chatter of some people just after service is over reminds me of the "fowls of the air" which picked up the corn and so prevented its taking root (Mark iv. 4).

In the intervals of Divine Service on the Lord's Day let improving books, quiet Christian talk, errands of mercy, or times of secret meditation and prayer be used as helps in directing your thoughts heavenward.

Attend your parish church when this is practicable. You are a member of a flock which has been entrusted to the care of the parochial minister, therefore you should not wander from the fold. He has, if he is a right-minded man, a strong personal interest in your welfare, and a solemn sense of responsibility concerning it. He watches for souls as they that must give account. Now, if you absent

yourself from his ministerial teaching, how can he hope to carry out his trust?

Take a right view of his office. He is not a pope to lord it over your conscience. He is not a priest in the sacerdotal sense. But he is a presbyter (or elder), to benefit you by his larger experience. He is a shepherd, to feed his flock with wholesome doctrine. He is a father in his family, to sympathise, counsel, and cheer.

In these respects, make use of his ministry, and may God's blessing upon it promote your growth in grace.

There may be circumstances, I am forced to allow, which will render it a duty not to frequent the church of your parish. If the preaching is not in accordance with the plain teaching of God's Word, or if the service is made to approximate to the popish ritual, then, I am sure, you are under no obligation to be present; nay, you have a testimony to deliver by withdrawing altogether.

In large and rapidly overgrown towns, where the parochial system has almost come, practically, to an end, and where you find the congregation of each church is made up, on the whole, of non-parishioners, my remarks do not so much apply. You may be so placed as to feel that it rests with you to *select* a church. Do so, then, carefully, choosing not the most fashionable one, nor the most eloquent preacher, but the church where you find the ministrations the most profitable to your spiritual welfare.

Do not wander from church to church. This is a prevalent evil in localities where several churches are

within reach. Thus a roving habit is fostered which hinders the mind from a profitable hearing of the Word, and substitutes for it "itching ears" and a species of hero-worship. Then, sensational preachings or choral services are likely to become the *religion* of these roving spirits. Not by any means a true religion, but a mockery of it, which is yet made to satisfy the conscience.

Unless there are very strong reasons indeed for it, do not attend one church while the rest of your family attend another. It is pleasant to see a whole family, parents and children, going together to God's House; it is a sweet picture of domestic concord. But to find that a youthful member of the family must go off to some other church is a discovery which I never make without regret. There seems a want of reverence for the family unity and a selfish independence, besides other objections which I could easily allege.

And especially should you accompany your family if you have reason to fear that they are not truly converted to God. You already differ from them on so many important points that you should not increase the difference where it can be avoided. Enter into all their plans when you can, show that your sympathies are strongly with them, and do not draw off to walk in a path of your own when duty does not require it.

But if the preaching does not profit us, are we still to go?

Yes, if it is evangelical. The preacher may be feeble, dull, and commonplace, but if he does really preach Gospel truth, that is enough for you, as a

guide to what your duty is. Chrysostom teaches us that a wooden key may open a lock as well as a gold one. Of course we prefer a gold key, but let us not despise the wooden one. The blessing which comes to you through the preaching of the Word depends upon God's grace and your faith. The man who brings God's message to you cannot give it its power. Do not look at the messenger so much as at Him who has sent him. He is only a channel—one of many channels—and God can send grace into your soul by whatever channel He may think fit. I believe you will get a full blessing, and the more so if you have thus put self aside, and thought of the comfort of others more than of your own.

This does not imply servile adherence to all the preacher's doctrinal views, as if he must be right because he is your minister. This would be to make him a pope. The Bereans, even though an inspired apostle preached to them, compared his teachings with God's word, and were counted persons of a noble temper for doing this (Acts xvii. 11). Take all you hear, therefore, to the Bible, and test its agreement (Prov. xxii. 20, 21; Phil. i. 10; I John iv. 1; Rev. ii. 2).

Do not let the outward show of a service attract you. Richly decorated churches, a gorgeous ritual, passionate appeals to the heart, theatrical performance of religious worship:—these things may awaken the imagination and charm the taste, but they can neither convert the heart nor sanctify it. They are the picture of worship, not its reality; they are of the earth, earthy, and they lack every claim to spirituality. Men may, even do, combine with

these things a worldly life and a heart given up altogether to its own idolatry. A poor old negrowoman, taken one day to see St. Paul's Cathedral, was so struck by the sublimity of that edifice that, as soon as she found herself under the dome, she fell on her knees on the marble pavement, exclaiming, "Surely God is here!" Now that was not a really religious feeling, but it might easily be mistaken for such. Do not make a similar mistake.

And if, when the sacred season of the Lord's Day comes, you are unavoidably prevented from joining "the great congregation," if sickness or some claim of duty keep you at home, remember, for your comfort, how God promised to his people, when they were far off from the city of their solemnities, that He would be unto them "a little sanctuary" (Ezek. xi. 16). Your sick-room or your solitary home shall then become the house of God and the gate of heaven in your happy experience; and in a sense which no awe-striking cathedral could make so real, you shall gratefully exclaim, "God is in this place."

I proceed to speak of your duty as members of the Catholic, or Universal Church. Remember, then, that you do not stand alone in that membership. Your lot in life may be one of seeming spiritual isolation. You may have no Christian friends. Like the prophet of old, you may feel that you are alone in your worship of Jehovah. But you are not really alone; a "great company which no man can number" now surround the throne in glory; they are your brothers and sisters. Multitudes are serving under the Captain of their Salvation in the church

militant here on earth; they are your brothers and sisters too. There is only one family in heaven and in earth, and to that family you belong. Endeavour to realise that grand and glorious article of our creed, "I believe in the Communion of Saints."

But, probably, you have Christian friends. You are one of a pious family. Then you have duties to discharge to those who are treading with you, hand-in-hand, the spiritual pilgrimage. You have to weep with them that weep, to rejoice with them that rejoice, to bear each other's burdens, and in various ways to fulfil the law of love.

You have given yourself first to Christ, then to his Church. It must be an earnest inquiry with you—How am I to live so as to promote the spiritual welfare of my fellow-disciples? If you know the way of the Lord more perfectly, teach the less experienced; if in deep sorrow you have received comfort, strive to give of that comfort to those who need it; if you are rich, minister of your substance to Christ in his members; if you are poor, you can intercede even for kings. Whatever talents, means, opportunities you possess, consecrate them for the service of Christ and his Church (Acts iv. 32).

Be a zealous member of that Church. Do not say, "Oh, there are plenty of people to work; I need not do anything." There is work for you to do.

Be zealous in promoting the interest of the particular congregation with which you are connected. Co-operate in its plans of usefulness; give it your hearty sympathy and support; say, by your actions, "I belong to you."

Be charitable, kind, and courteous to those from whom you differ. Do not judge them; to their own Master they stand or fall (Rom. xiv. 4). Think and let think. It is not likely that all the light is with you: some must be with them. See what Jesus said concerning some good persons who did not join His band of disciples (Mark ix. 39).

At the same time, love your Church dearly; love her all the more that she is passing through graver perils than ever yet have tried her. But know why it is that you love her. Do not let your preference for your Church be either unintelligent or bigoted. Do not regard Church principles as of no importance, or of little importance. I do not agree with those who say it matters not whether we go to church or chapel. The members of a religious communion should have reasons for belonging to it; reasons which appear to them to justify their adherence as a Christian duty. And they should be able to state the grounds on which their denominational preference is based.

Why, then, do we prefer to be Churchmen? The great reason is because our Church's creed, her worship, her organization, and her discipline are in accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture and the practice of the Apostolic Church. We believe her ecclesiastical form to be the most Scriptural.

And we also believe it to be the best adapted to the wants of the nation. Its system we regard as the one of greatest practical usefulness. There may be narrow-mindedness and bigotry among some who belong to it, but there is nothing narrowminded or bigoted in its articles or its ritual. It breathes a large-hearted Christianity.

We love it, also, because it is a Protestant Church. The blood of martyrs is the seed of its vitality. It is thoroughly outspoken in its vindication of the truth as it is in Jesus. Its very existence as an establishment is a proof that it has no alliance with Rome.

- "The church of my fathers! I love it; and pray,
  That God would watch over and keep it each day;
  Would purge it from error, and shield it from ill,
  And make it more fully his purpose fulfil.
- "The church of my fathers! I love it; its creed Is based on the Scriptures inspired for our need; Its ritual is simple; its articles pure; And the good of the nation it seeks to secure.
- "The church of my fathers! I love it; endeared
  By the martyrs who fought for the truths they revered,
  And died in their noble defence; and we know
  That our freedom to-day, to their life-blood we owe.
- "The church of my fathers! I love it; yet all Who trust in the Saviour, my brethren I call; And soon we shall join in His infinitelove, The church of the firstborn, in glory above."



### CHAPTER XVII.

## ON THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"THIS do in remembrance of Me."

The words were spoken to disciples; to men who, with many failings, were still sincere in their attachment to Jesus.

If you are a disciple, if in your heart there is any real affection for Jesus, He now speaks these words to you.

They imply privilege.

They also enjoin duty.

You cannot neglect the Holy Communion without manifesting indifference to the wishes of an absent friend, and without disobeying His positive command.

The question is not, Are you holy? but, Do you love? Have you so realized your guilt as a sinner as to come to Christ in penitence and faith, and is that faith so working by love in your heart that you can say you love Him who loved you, and gave Himself for you? Then you are, in the language of our Prayer-book, "a worthy receiver."

It will be both interesting and instructive if we carefully examine the record of the institution of the Lord's Supper.

It was on the first day of the eating unleavened bread (Exod. xii. 18) that Peter and John were sent to prepare the Passover. They killed and roasted a lamb, prepared the Charoseth (an infusion of dates, figs, &c., into which the "sop" was dipped), the bitter herbs, wine, and bread. The usual Passover ceremonies were these:—

The head of the household, officiating as priest, opened the feast with a short prayer, and then handed round a cup of wine. All drank, and then washed their hands. Then the lamb, the bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and other dishes were brought in. While eating, the son asked his father the signification of this festival. The 113th and 114th Psalms were sung. After this the second cup passed round. The host took the flat cakes of bread, broke and distributed them to the guests, who dipped them in the infusion of bitter herbs and ate them. The third cup followed, called "the cup of blessing," and Psalms 115 to 118 were sung. After the fourth cup came Psalms 120 to 134. called the "Great Hallelujah." With a fifth cup the meal concluded.

From these rites our Saviour selected two—the breaking of bread and the cup of blessing—to give them a deeper symbolical meaning, and to ordain their continued observance by his disciples until He should come again.

When he distributed the broken bread He said that it represented His body about to suffer for them. The phrase "this is" is commonly employed as equivalent to "this represents" or "this is like" (Ezek. v. 5; 1. Cor. x. 16; xi. 25; Gal. iv. 25). It could not mean that the bread was changed into the body of Christ, nor that in some mysterious

manner Christ's body was in it, for His body was just then reclining on the table, and could not, in any sense, be in two places at once. When He said, "I am the door" (John x. 7), or, "I am the true vine" (John xv. 1), He could only mean He was like a door and a vine.

The same remarks apply to the cup. He could not mean that the wine was His blood. Indeed, to take His words quite literally, we should be forced to understand Him as asserting that the cup was the blood (Luke xxii. 20), which would be absurd.

The disciples, being accustomed to the use of figurative language, did not misunderstand Christ. Indeed, they would have been horror-struck had they taken literally his words, "This is my blood," because they well knew how strictly the Mosaic law prohibited the drinking of blood.

The disciples were to drink the wine as the sign of Christ's testament or covenant (Luke xxii. 20). Ancient covenants were made binding by blood. The more barbarous nations actually drank blood when joining in solemn covenants; but by the more civilised people red wine, resembling blood, and meant to signify it, was used instead. The Mosaic covenant was confirmed by the blood of bulls and goats.

They were also to observe this feast as a memorial of Christ's love, shown in dying for them (Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 25).

They were to do so till he came again (1 Cor. xi. 25, 26); showing the permanent obligation of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper, then, is a feast, an oppor-

tunity of manifesting grateful joy as you think of the blessings which have come to you through the Atoning Blood of Christ. The word *Eucharist* sometimes given to it means Thanksgiving. I trust it will always be with thankful feelings that you kneel at the Sacred Table.

It is also "a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another" (I Cor. xi. 20-34).

It is a "badge or token of Christian men's profession;" for thus you show forth your Lord's death (1 Cor. v. 8; xi. 26) and your faith in Him as the Saviour of your soul.

It may also be rightly styled a sacrament. This was, anciently, an oath taken by soldiers to be faithful to their general and their country. It was also applied to the gage or money-deposit paid into court before a trial, the gain or loss of which depended on the result of the action. It is your pledge of fidelity to the Saviour's service, your gage or challenge to the whole world that you are honest in your avowed discipleship.

It is also a pledge on the part of Christ to assure us of his grace (See Article XXV.). He does not mean to disappoint us. The Supper is a pledge that the Holy Spirit will work in us by means of our faith while we are obeying the command of our dying Redeemer. And so it comes to pass that the bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ, and the wine which we drink is a partaking of the Blood of Christ (1 Cor. x. 16). Believing in Jesus is spiritually eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John vi. 53); for it is by this faith that

we grow in grace, and have our spiritual life made more vigorous. We are thus said to feed on Jesus "in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving."

This explains the strong language of our Catechism, where it affirms that the body and blood of Christ "are verily and indeed taken and received in the Lord's Supper," for if our souls are strengthened by communion with Jesus, then we may say we have "taken and received" Him in our hearts. If you draw near to His Table in faith, penitence and love, you receive Him in a spiritual manner. His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20); but this cannot refer to any bodily presence, for He himself declared, "I go to my Father, and ye see me no more" (John xvi. 10); it means that wherever his people meet in His name, they shall have the enjoyment of His spiritual presence. pecially, then, may we look for Him when we meet around His Table, and believe He will be known of us in the breaking of bread (Luke xxiv. 35).

How often should you partake of the Communion?

No rule can be given. Christ said, "As oft as ye drink it," certainly intimating the frequency of its observance. The Apostles and early church appear to have "broken bread" every Lord's day (Acts xx. 7). Our Reformers strongly recommended a weekly communion, but no enactment was made to that effect. From Acts ii. 46 we may infer that it was observed to a considerable extent daily in the primitive church. It must be left to your own discretion how often you

are a communicant. The spirit in which you partake is of more consequence than the frequency of your communion; though, I trust, you will be a regular communicant.

Before you go to the Lord's Table you should seriously examine yourself as to the state of your heart and the foundation on which your faith rests (I Cor. xi. 28).

The Lord's Supper will not profit you if you regard it with a superstitious feeling, as if it were a species of religious charm. There is no spiritual grace or power inherent in the sacramental bread or wine. Do not rest on your strict observance of this holy rite; rest only on Christ whom it symbolises. Let the symbol lead your thoughts to the great Sacrifice which it figures to you.

- "This is the hour of banquet and of song,
  This is the heavenly table spread for me;
  Here let me feast, and feasting, still prolong
  The brief bright hour of fellowship with Thee.
- "Too soon we rise; the symbols disappear;
  The feast, though not the love, is passed and gone;
  The bread and wine remove, but Thou art here;
  Nearer than ever; still my shield and sun.
- "Feast after feast thus comes and passes by;
  Yet passing, points to the glad feast above,
  Giving sweet foretaste of the festal joy,
  The Lamb's great Bridal Feast of bliss and love."



#### CHAPTER XVIII.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

I f you were taking a country walk it wou quite natural that, on reaching a rising groyou should stand for a short time on its su and look back to see how far you had we And it is not only natural, but also an impoduty, that you should do the same in your relifie. It is right to examine your spiritual ence, that you may see how far you have made progress.

This will involve an examination both of and conduct.

You must examine conduct as to failures in inconsistences, &c. Has your light shone stea Have there been evidences in your outwar of Christian endurance, self-denial, and lo Christ?

Your friends could answer these question you, if you were to ask them; but I do not remend you to do so. It will generally be bett you to put these questions to yourself, as listen to the account which conscience will giv

But you must not be content with making duct only the subject of this self-examin Some people do so, but very mistakenly. We secure a very partial and very deceptive res

we only look at our outward life. For our conduct may be right in one sense, and quite wrong in another. Suppose a person is careful in attending to religious duties. Surely this is right. But why is he careful? It may be because he has been religiously trained, and use is now second nature. Moreover, the customs of society around him are such as to make it almost necessary that he should appear religious. And his desire to please his friends may induce him to show an interest in religion. Besides, his natural energy finds a pleasant channel for itself in works of Christian love. really enjoys taking an active part in spiritual labour. It is quite possible to do so with a heart still unrenewed by grace. And thus his outward life may be correct and praiseworthy, while the motives which govern it are not those of true piety.

Love to Christ, desires for the Divine glory, these are evangelical motives; the presence of these in the heart prove it to be in a right state.

But a look at the conduct will not always show this. We are often disposed to infer motives from acts, but we cannot be sure that we are correct, because we cannot look into another's heart. Therefore we must not judge others (Rom. xiv. 4). At best we can only guess what motives may be actuating them.

But we may judge ourselves, because we can look into our own hearts.

This is even of more consequence than the looking at our conduct. The Bible declares that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Prov. xxiii. 7);

that is, the thoughts are the springs or roots Eve thought of taking the forbidfruit, and then she plucked it off the bough. state of the heart shows what the state of the c duct will be if a person is free to act out his f ings and desires. The force of circumstances 1 I may cut off the head restrain the acts. thistle, and so prevent its bursting open its s vessel, but it remains a thistle still; its nature still prompt it to produce more thistle-heads. wish to deal effectually with it I shall try to loose root in the ground, so that I may be able to pu up. Tust so must self-examination be a root-w Look into your heart to see what work is nee there, if you would make your conduct effects right.

This is not easy. Suppose your lawn were c grown with daisies; it would be far more easy roll a mowing machine over it and cut off the cheads than to stoop down and slowly grub up clinging daisy-root. It is slow and tedious, even painful work. But it is far more useful cause, as you see, more thorough.

And what increases the difficulty is our ignor of our own self.

Now, here you might say to me, "Surely I c to know myself sufficiently for this. If I ca read another person's feelings, I can my own know what I think, and feel, and desire."

Ah, but what says God's Word about this thing? "The heart is deceitful above all t and desperately wicked; who can know it?" xvii. 9). Believe me, it will be the business

life-time to know yourself truly. When Saul was directing and sanctioning the murder of Stephen, he looked into his own heart, and what did he there perceive? Sincere desires for God's glory. He "thought he was doing God service." But there was no true self-knowledge. He himself said afterwards that he had been acting "ignorantly." When light came into his mind, then his heart-searching led to a very different self-estimate, and he judged himself to be "the chief of sinners."

Our self-love is the cause of this erroneous self-judgment. We are aware of this in reference to the questions of every-day life. We often decline to give an opinion about something, because we are "an interested party," and, therefore, are afraid our judgment will not be an impartial one. And so, when we put ourselves into the "balances of the sanctuary," we are very likely to poise the scales unfairly, though we do not mean to do so. We mean to be exact in our reckoning; yet somehow it is likely to be in our own favour.

We need, therefore, a twofold prayer. First that God would search us and show us ourselves as He sees us (Ps. xxvi. 2).

Secondly, that He would aid us in discharging rightly this duty of self-examination.

For it is a duty. We are commanded to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith, and so to make a true proof of our inner life (2 Cor. xiii. 5).

This thorough self-searching is an element in all true repentance (2 Cor. vii. 11),

And it is essential to a healthy condition of our spiritual life. How disadvantageous it would be to a tradesman never to examine into the state of his business. If he allowed year after year to pass without balancing his ledger, it would be impossible for him to form a true notion of his commercial position. Had he gained or lost by his trading; had there been any want of tact or enterprise; or had some wasteful expenditure been unchecked? This could only be known by a careful insight into his business affairs. And this insight would be very difficult if for years all the details of the business had been allowed to get into a confused and unbalanced state. And so is it with that higher business, your stewardship for Christ, your responsibility to those around you, your own salvation's out-working. You ought to think soberly "about yourself" (Rom. xii. 3), and there can be no "sobriety"—no calm, humble, honest self-estimate—without careful self-examination.

When should this take place? What rising ground will present itself in our journey of life whence we may thoughtfully survey our past walk?

Each evening will be a fitting time, for-

"'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to heaven."

Sit down quietly, and think over the day, its duties, trials, temptations, joys. Think whether the inscription on the day should be a thanksgiving or an epitaph; whether you should write "Ebenezer" ("Hitherto the Lord hath helped

me"), or, with a certain king, "Perdidi diem" ("I have lost a day").

The same remarks will also apply to the close of a year. There is something very solemn in the thoughts which crowd into the mind as we mark the hand on the dial almost pointing to the last moment of the dying year, something which itself suggests much heart-searching.

Another appropriate season will be during illness. How am I acting under a Heavenly Father's discipline? Is my life now such as glorifies Him? Am I meetening for heaven?

Also, on recovery from illness; for that sickness has been "not unto death," and must have come to you with a design. How far is the design worked out?

Before partaking of the Lord's Supper there should be self-examination (1 Cor. xi. 28).

There are also special seasons appointed by our Church for humbling ourselves before God, and at such times you will do well to look within.

Special seasons may also occur in your life, such as a birthday, some fault which you have committed, some time of declension in heart or conduct, or some occasion of earthly sorrow, when conscience may usefully hold its court, and give you its decision.

There are devotional books which may, perhaps, aid you in this examination, but I prefer recommending to you a close and prayerful study of God's word. As heart answers to heart, so will the records of spiritual experience in the Bible be seen very frequently to correspond with your own

while the precepts and promises which so richly fill the sacred page will furnish you with a standard of what your life ought to be.

Above all, study the life and words of Jesus, so that you may see how far you have made your life a copy of His.

It may also help you if you keep a diary. A record of your life day after day, written faithfully, will enable you, whenever you please, to compare the past with the present, and thus to ascertain your rate of spiritual progress.

But I must now guard you against some DANGERS. In the holiest path may lurk a snare, and your very efforts after sanctification may even hinder it. Mark, then, some injurious results of self-examination which are possible, and which are also very probable, unless you watch against them.

You may, then, be led to indulge self-complacency. If you find you have grown in grace, have more easily overcome Satan, have given up worldly pleasures with a heartier surrender, are following Jesus closely while others are deserting Him, you may be prompted to a good opinion of yourself, and forget where alone the praise is due.

If, on the other hand, you discover more of the sinfulness of your heart than you had heretofore learned, mistrust may creep in. And despair may follow. You may say, "I have been growing worse instead of better; I have yielded so easily to temptation that it seems almost useless to attempt to lead a consistent life." Many a young person has talked in this way, and if he has not aban-

doned his discipleship, his soul is like Pharaoh's chariots when their wheels came off.

Besides, too close a self-scrutiny may lead to bondage of spirit. You might study the anatomy of your body till you became afraid to swallow a particle of food, and you may easily do something analogous in your religious life. This life is a happy, free life, and you must guard against anything, however right in itself, becoming a fetter or clog upon its joyous liberty. If you were trying to walk straight across a field, and you looked down at every step you were taking, I am sure your path would soon be a crooked one. To walk straight you should fix your eye on some distant object, and walk steadily towards it. You could do this without altogether omitting to notice how you were walking. Apply this to your walk as a disciple.

And self-examination will do you harm instead of good, if it divert your believing gaze from the Author and Finisher of your faith. Looking at self is right and salutary, but not so if it prevent us from looking to Jesus.

There are some excellent remarks on this subject in a letter by Martin Boos, a Roman Catholic priest in Bavaria, much persecuted for his evangelical views:—"When the Holy Spirit examines our consciences with us, He also soon shows us the remedy, points us immediately to Christ as made unto us righteousness, and thus He alone is sufficient for us. But if Satan examines our consciences with us, or Moses, he points out no Christ for us, no means of escape, but only wrath, requirements,

and sin. If he should ever come to you in the manner, grant him that you are all that which it possible for him to imagine. But then show he Christ dying on the cross for you, and the inquitor will take to flight, and the examination terrinate."

And when the examination has terminated, wh should be its practical results?

First, as Boos so well states, a more earnest locing to Jesus as our righteousness and our peace.

Next, a more humbling sense of our own wor lessness and insufficiency, and a firmer resolve depend for strength on the God of all grace.

And then an eager pressing forward to lay he on the things which are before, not resting in posent attainments, but seeking for a higher spirit life, and a renewed determination to know nothin among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, at to count all things as worthless, when compared with the excellency which is in Jesus.

"Thou that with the Father art, One in power, in glory One, Yet within the trusting heart Bearest witness with the Son,

"Give us watchful eyes and clear, Purgèd from the scales of sense, Seeing still the Master near, And the City far from hence."



# CHAPTER XIX.

#### ON SPIRITUAL DECLENSION.

OW delightful it would be to feel sure that you will always keep close to Jesus, always honour Him by a bright consistency of life, always carry your cross cheerfully after Him, always rejoice in Him with joyunspeakable and full of glory, always spend and be spent in his service; so that "no man may despise your youth," but may point to you as "an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity (I Tim. iv. 12).

Nor need it be otherwise, as remarked in a previous part of this book (p. 154). The way to the Throne is ever open; grace is abundant and free. "My God shall supply all your need" (Phil. iv. 19).

Yet such is the weakness and imperfection of our nature, even when renewed by the Holy Spirit, that it is quite possible that you may some time know by your own sad experience what declension means.

And so, lest, if that dark hour come, you should not know where to look for light, nor how to gain once more the path of peace, I now speak about this painful matter.

What is spiritual declension?

It is what that word signifies—a bending down or aside; a swerving from the uprightness and steadfastness of true Christian living. When Peter said, before the Jewish council, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," he showed the strong, sturdy straightforwardness of a healthy piety. They might imprison, but they could not bend him. But when the same Peter came to Antioch, his fear of offending "them which were of the circumcision" led him to adopt a policy which his brother apostle severely censured as a turning aside from strict Christian principle. Peter was bending down from moral uprightness. His dissimulation was a declension.

This declension may refer to one act, as in Peter's case, or it may refer to the general state of the heart or of the conduct.

It may be secret, known only to God; or public, so as to be noted and mourned over by other disciples.

As examples of heart-declension I may refer you to the Epistles to the Churches of Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea. The Christians there had gone back sadly from their ancient fervour of love, their purity of life, their simplicity of faith, yet they had not given up their discipleship. They preserved the outward form of a Christian church, though their life was so unworthy of their creed.

Heart-declension, if continued, will in most cases lead to outward declension. Not for a considerable period of time, perhaps, but still eventually.

Declension, in reference to any one line of

Christian duty, will lead, if persisted in, to a state of declension from all Christian principle and practice. If there be a giving way in one thing, it will lead to a general divergence from the standard of the spiritual life.

This declension is a very gradual thing. It commences in small variations from the line of God's commandments, and may need great watchfulness to detect it. Let me briefly sketch its course.

It usually begins in the season of prayer. Prayer is not as real and fervent as it was, not so much the communing of the heart with God. There is less yearning for the hour of devotion to come. Business or pleasure is allowed to abridge the exercise of devotion, and sometimes to supersede it. The prayer is hurried, formal, unrealising.

Still it is not altogether abandoned. Conscience is too much awake to allow so glaring a deviation at present.

Nay, the very feeling of a want of earnestness or reality about it may cause it to be clung to as if it were a species of charm. Superstition may take the place of spirituality; just as a Romanist may multiply Aves and Paternosters to compensate for a deficiency in heart-worship. The less there is of the true spirit of prayer the more there may sometimes be the practice of prayer.

Coldness in the closet will occasion lukewarmness in the life. If the fire is not kept burning on the heart's altar, the ardency of spiritual converse will die away on the lips. A moral paralysis will gradually benumb all the soul's faculties. The

Cross, which has been carried cheerfully, will be found too heavy, and will, if possible, be laid aside in some way which is inconsistent with fidelity to Christ. There will be less power to withstand the force of the current of worldliness; the tendency to go with the stream will be only feebly resisted.

The world will have more power to attract. Its unsatisfactory character will be forgotten in the presence of its seductions. Its children will seem pleasanter companions; the disciple will be sadly too much at home with them. After a faint show of resistance—just to save appearances—he will go with them to the dance, the theatre, the cardtable, or to any other scene of pleasure in which they find their highest satisfaction.

All this time conscience has not been silent. It speaks in weaker tones, but it does speak. The disciple finds it necessary to stifle its utterances. He argues with it that what he is doing he is *forced* to do; or that, at any rate, there are extenuating cirstances; or that it is only a temporary departure from the path, a mere step or two aside which he will soon retrace.

But all this is irksome. It is difficult to pacify conscience. The excuses are felt to be insufficient.

The heart grows sad under the attempt. The steps are "halting," or lame, through trying to walk in two paths at once (I Kings xviii. 21); for a sense of its impropriety alloys the indulgence of worldly pleasure, while the effort to preserve a title to Christian discipleship becomes painfully a failure.

Then, tired of a protracted and unhappy struggle, the disciple may resolve to give up being a Christian, and resign himself without further scruple to the influences of a worldly career.

In doing this, he need not give up altogether the Christian name. He can still "profess and call himself a Christian," for so do the baptised heathen around him, who claim the status of a Christian, though they do not manifest his spirit or character. He may attend church, for this seems essential to properly-behaved worldliness — analogous to the one shutter put up outside a Sabbath-breaker's shop—and he may take a nominal or easy part in acts of Christian charity. He is not obliged to openly avow his apostacy.

When he has reached this sad extreme of declension, what shall we say concerning his discipleship?

Either that there never has been the existence of any real grace within it (1 John ii. 19); or that it is a backsliding from God's ways which will bring down upon it His severe chastisement.

For the warnings of God's Word are many and awful against this sin, and we are sure that it must awaken the Father's anger. The Bible says of such persons that they have "turned aside after Satan;" that they "have damnation because they have cast away their faith;" that "they draw back unto perdition;" "that they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame;" that they "do despite to the Spirit of grace;" that they have "fallen into the snare of the devil." Is not this terrible language

But not too strong, if you think of the aggravation of the sin. Listen to the solemn words of the Apostle Peter:—"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. ii. 20, 21).

Is not this quite true? Far better never to have followed Christ as his disciple than to turn back and forsake Him; for surely this will bring a reproach on Christ much more than a mere refusal to become his disciple would do.

Far better never to adopt the Christian standard of holy living than to adopt it and yet show that our acts are glaringly inconsistent with it. The world, for example, is far more severe on a professed disciple of Christ who is guilty of commercial dishonesty than it is if one of its own children is the transgressor.

And justly so, for the disciple professes to have a purer code of morals, and to be actuated by a nobler motive. He professes to live in the realization of God's all-seeing presence, to love his neighbour as himself, and to do all with a single eye to the Saviour's glory. His fall is from a greater height than that of ordinary sinners.

Such a fall, therefore, must call for God's severe discipline. His forgiving love, though ready to "put away the sin" when his child has repented, will not put away the chastening, for reasons such as that which Nathan gave to David (2 Sam. xii. 14).

If any one who has thus wandered from the straight and narrow path is now reading these pages, let me stop and address a word to him of loving expostulation.

My dear friend, I know you are not happy. may venture to regard you as really one of God's children, I am sure you must be a stranger to peace of mind while you are away from Him. You cannot be happy while walking unworthily of that high and holy calling wherewith you have been called. You may go through a giddy round of pleasure, and then go through a round of religious ceremonies, so as to be very busy with the one thing or the other, and thus put serious reflection aside; but it can only be for a time. When a quiet moment comes, and you think, then I know you are not happy. The "blessedness" of which, like the Galatians (iv. 15), you once could speak has departed from you. You have lost your relish for things divine; and yet their remembered savour mars the sweetness of the world's feasts, even though "the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine are there" in promise of the gavest revelry.

I am rejoiced that you are not happy. Could I think you were, I must look upon you, in the mournfulness of unavailing sorrow, as one "twice dead, plucked up by the roots" (Jude 12). But no, your "conscience is not yet seared as with a hot iron" (I Tim. iv. 2). You are unhappy, therefore I have hope of your return to God.

For you may return. Your Heavenly Father's own loving invitation is, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed thee" (Isa. xliv. 22).

Do you wish to return? Does Job's language suit your case?—"Oh, that I were as in months past, the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth."

Then, dear friend, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive me graciously; so will I render the sacrifice of my lips" (Hos. xiv. 2).

What will He reply? "I will heal his backsliding; I will love him freely: for mine anger is turned away from him" (Hos. xiv. 4). He now waits to be gracious unto you.

If you are thoroughly in earnest, then you will search carefully for the CAUSE of your declension, so that you may strive against its influence now, and guard against it for the future. What has been the cause of your wandering from the right path?

Has it been an undue love of pleasure?

It is not wrong to love pleasant things? It is not wrong to smile and laugh, and find subjects for pure and simple merriment in the small phenomena of daily life. I believe that a little child gathering buttercups and daisies is more religious in God's sight than the pharisee making his long prayers. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth" (Eccles. xi. 9).

Yet innocent pleasures bring snares. A deadly serpent may lurk within a bed of flowers. This is not to prevent us from gathering flowers, only we must do it guardedly.

Has it been the engrossing claims of your business?

Now, diligence in an earthly calling is a Christian duty, enforced by the highest sanctions, and it is a pseudo-piety which spoils a man for his place in this world. Prayer in the closet should be a whetstone for the edge of industry. Yet a man should not labour so much for the meat that perisheth as for that which endureth to eternal life, and it is possible to become secularists in heart and conduct if not in faith. This may have been the reason of your declining love and zeal in the Saviour's service.

Has it been selfishness?

Selfishness, I mean, not in its broad, open consciousness, but hidden under some specious garb of duty, or of so amiable and refined a spirit that it might seem a very pardonable infirmity—a slight weakness, nothing more.

Ah! that "slight weakness" is the little crevice "between the joints of the harness" which may slay a king (1 Kings xxii. 34).

Has it been an unwatchful spirit?

"Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" asked the Master of his slumbering disciples. Ah! had they done so, methinks they would not have cowardly fled from Him in the moment of danger. Unwatchful—then the temptation comes—then the declension begins. Has some idol been set up in the temple of the heart?

Some creature-love, some cherished lust, may have usurped the supremacy which rightfully is Christ's. Like Achan in the Hebrew camp, this will paralyse all spiritual vigour, and ensure defeat in all spiritual conflicts (Mat. x. 37-39).

Has it been self-dependence?

Have you trusted to your own strength as sufficient to carry you through duty and trial? Have you felt, It is impossible I should give way? Have you tried to find peace in your holiness, your prayers, your struggles, your progress in the religious life?

Nay, has it made you self-complacent to think how completely you have given up self-reliance? This seems a paradox, but it is too often true. An old writer says, "Our very tears of penitence need washing in the Saviour's blood;" and he is right, for our deepest self-abasement may become auxiliary to our self-trust. We have joined Bunyan's shepherd-boy in singing—

"He that is down, needs fear no fall, He that is low, no pride;"

and may have forgotten to notice that there is a sense in which those lines are not true.

When you have discovered the cause of your declension, then resolve, by God's help, to forsake whatever has been directly or indirectly inimical to your spiritual progress. If it seem almost impossible to be done—like plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand—remember the everlasting welfare of your soul depends on the present issue,

and that God's grace can and will supply the requisite strength.

And then go to the Throne of Grace, as you went at first, as guilty, and unworthy, but as one who believes that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.

And let every future step be one of increased Maintain a constant watch, nourish a caution. godly jealousy over yourself. Keep closer to Christ; live on Him more realisingly, and let your communion with Him, through his ordinances, be more frequent. Avoid the very appearance of evil, and hate even the garment which has been spotted by the flesh (Jude 23). Sin no more lest a worse thing come to you (John v. 14). Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour (2 Pet. iii. 18). "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord" (2 Pet. i. 10, 11).

- "Thy staff may strike—I will not shrink again, Or spurn Thy warning voice, Or seek a pathway without toil or pain, Of mine own erring choice;
- "But in the footsteps of the flock, my way
  With duteous love I'll take,
  And strive to curb my will, and day by day,
  All devious ways forsake.
- "Then guide me, tender Shepherd, lest I die, Or farther from Thee roam; In pity heed thy wanderer's heart-wrung cry, And bring me safely home."



#### CHAPTER XX.

#### ENCOURAGEMENTS.

You are now a Christian. You have not only inquired the way to Zion, but are walking in that way—the way of Holiness, the King's Highway, the way marked by your Saviour's footsteps, the way to your Heavenly home. You are taking up your cross daily, and bearing it after Jesus. You are a living epistle, inscribed, by divine grace, with words of life, and peace, and joy.

As such I wish now to congratulate you. I have replied to your questions, and given you many needful counsels and cautions. I therefore devote this closing chapter to the mentioning of some encouragements which may serve as cordials for your pilgrimage. Be of good cheer.

First—and most delightful thought!—the Lord Jesus is pleased with you. He wanted you to be his friend. Just as we know He yearned over Jerusalem, longing to gather its guilty inhabitants under the sacred shelter of his love, so had He desired that you should be saved. His love rested on you, and sought a willing response. It was not a matter of indifference to Him that you were outside the safe shelter of his fold; He longed to number you among his flock. It was part of "the travail of his soul" that your redemption should be

effected. So He drew you "with cords of love and with bands of a man," and you became willing in the day of his power. And now He delights in you. He "rejoices over you with joy, He rests in his love" (Zeph. iii. 17). The smallest concern of your daily life now interests Him. He is pleased when He beholds in your Christian life the reflection of his own bright image; He will be grieved should your walk as a disciple not adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour. He is touched with the feeling of all your infirmities, and in all your afflictions He is afflicted. You are very dear to Him.

Oh, how wonderful is this! That Jesus should care whether you love Him or not! That He should take pleasure in such a poor creature as you! That amidst the glories of heaven, and the new songs which celebrate the triumphs of his grace, He should stoop down with an intent look of love, and watch you, and smile upon you, and tell you how He cares for you, and wants your best love, just as He wanted Peter's (John xxi. 15).

Wonderful, but quite true. And very cheering. So that when the world is cold to you, and friends are estranged, and enemies even rise up in your own household, and you sigh and think, "Alas! no one cares for me!" then there shall come into your mind the bright thought, "Jesus loves me; He does not despise my affection; He is one with me, and I am one with Him!"

And not only does he value your friendship, but He is ever with you. He will never leave nor forsake you (Heb. xiii. 5). In the furnace of trial, in the floods of sorrow, or in the dark valley of the shadow of death, His blessed presence shall be with you to guide, protect, sanctify, and cheer. Your most lonely moments shall bring your best company, for Jesus will then "talk comfortably" to you (Hosea ii. 14). Your seasons of deepest grief shall prove the readiness and sufficiency of his sympathy and love. And when heart and flesh are failing, He will be the strength of your heart and your portion for ever. Happy friend of Jesus! The worldling knows Him not, or he might well envy you.

And you have a Father in heaven who careth for you. A sparrow falls not to the ground without his cognisance. You are of more value than many sparrows. Take, then, no undue, no over-anxious, no sinful thought about the wants of your earthly life; your Father knoweth that you have need of food and raiment, and will supply your need. Fear not the trials and difficulties of life, for if it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke xii. 32), surely He will not withhold the little everyday mercies which the heirs to that kingdom may require. Learn from the birds of the air and the lilies of the field lessons of loving confidence, and while seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, be satisfied that all needed blessings shall be added unto you. "I believe," said a good man, "that if God thought it would be for my welfare to give me the world, He would give me the world." Exercise this faith in your Father's love and care, and you shall never be without a crust in your cupboard and a song in your heart.

It will encourage you to remember that the Holy Spirit will strengthen you for duty, nerve you for trial, lead you into all truth, admonish you when tempted to wander, guide you in a holy walk, make you sensible of His love (Rom. xv. 30), give you the power of "trying spirits" (I John iv. I), and minister to your experience of joy (Gal. v. 22; I Thess. i. 6). You will not be left to yourself, but light, power, wisdom, sweetness—all that is essential to a holy and happy life—is guaranteed to you.

The angels in heaven rejoice over you. They will often come for your succour, for they have received a charge concerning you (Psa. xci. 11), and you shall frequently be indebted to them for their real though unseen ministries of love (Heb. i. 14).

The Lord's people are glad to have you among them. They regard your admission to their family as a continued evidence of the power of the Gospel of Christ unto the sinner's salvation. If any of them are your Christian relatives who have sorrowed over your indecision and prayed for God's grace to terminate it, how deep and unfeigned is now their gladness! You are now more truly one with them. You are their relative for eternity. Mark how delighted good Dr. Winslow says he was when his eldest son—a youth of fourteen—first told him of his resolve to acknowledge Christ as his Saviour:—

"The first sensation was that of a pleasant dream that seemed too blissful to realise. The head throbbed; the eye was moistened; the cup of gladness was more than full. My child was a child of God! The prayers which preceded his birth, which cradled his infancy, which girdled his youth, were

answered—my son was Christ's! The wei watchings, the yearning desires, the trembling hoj of years were at rest—our first-born was avowe the Lord's."

There are many advantages connected with ea piety. It is a good thing that you have comment Christian discipleship early. Your piety will come strong through its gradual development. I piety of a man of forty years who gave his heart God as a child is a more vigorous thing than piety of a man who at the same age has just beg to tread the narrow way. It grows with our grow develops in harmony with mental and mc laws, and is disciplined by the experiences of ea year as it passes, till it reaches, under the sunsh of the Spirit, the healthy maturity of full Christ life.

And from this it follows that early piety is modurable than late piety. And this is corroborate by the results of much careful observation: the who have professed the earliest have persevered longest.

It is a comfort to think that you have an efficisafeguard against the dangers of an evil world this early discipleship. You will be preserved fror liability to many temptations which beset the who are avowedly of the world. You p sess a counter-charm in the presence and love Jesus that will deprive earthly snares of their por to attract. Preoccupied with the concerns of et nity, how can you live for the changing scenes time? Glowing with zeal for the extension of Saviour's kingdom, your prompt reply to the ir tations of worldly pleasure will be, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?" (Neh. vi. 3.)

It is pleasant to reflect that the sooner you begin to work for Jesus, the longer will be your service of If your life should extend to fifty or sixty years, or longer, how delightful the retrospect if you can say nearly the whole of those years has been spent in glorifying Jesus! It is better to spend a day in the vineyard than at the eleventh hour to feel there is only one hour left in which to work. An old man, converted when the infirmities of age are enfeebling all his powers, must be thankful to God's grace for bringing him to the Cross of Christ, and he may have a firm persuasion of his interest in His finished work; but he must be a stranger to the joy of an aged saint who can trace the Lord's gracious dealings with him year by year from that sacred hour in early youth when he first opened his heart to receive Christ.

But you may not have a long life. Then early piety will fit you for an early death. I do not want to cloud your anticipations by any morbid contemplation of death. Some young persons dwell on the thought of it in a way that is not healthy, and they either become gloomy or unnaturally excited. If you are well and healthy, there is every reason to suppose you will reach an average of human life; or, if you are weak and often ill, still, with care, you are likely to live for many years to come. It will weaken the proper springs and motives of life and conduct to be often saying to yourself,

"Perhaps I shall not live very long!" Still you may die young; and there need be nothing unwelcome in the supposition, if you are a true believer in Jesus. Now you are ready, and the summons, whether it come early or late, will have a pleasant sound, for it calls you to your Father's home. Whether as the first "green ears" which God sometimes accepts as an offering (Lev. ii. 14), or as the shock of corn fully ripe (Job v. 26), you may be gathered, I cannot tell; nor do I wish to know. I am satisfied with the fact that you are now under the consecration.

And not only will early piety fit you for an early summons to depart, but it will also avail to take away the natural dread of death which often produces spiritual bondage (Heb. ii. 15).

"I feel," said Adelaide Newton, in a letter to a friend, "as if it would be quite impossible to express the change which is come over me in thinking of death. It used to be my favourite subject. But now it seems not worth a thought. Indeed, I quite dislike it, not from any fear of it, but from a kind of feeling that it is one of the things a Christian has left behind. No: that does not express it, for it is still to come. But I mean that we have actually got the victory over it in Jesus. And I think as one realises union with Him, one feels to have done with it in Him, and that the circumstances attending death need not be anticipated one whit more than those of any other trial which may or may not be 'on the morrow.' And there seems to me such extraordinary liberty and happiness in this. I would anticipate nothing, but rejoice in the present privileges of my inheritance, so far as I am enabled to do so, from moment to moment."

There are special promises for early piety. We do not wish to limit God's grace. We know that it can bring the summer-time of spiritual joy amidst the snows of the winter of old age, and that there is no moment in human life which does not belong to the "accepted time" and the "day of salvation." But there are no rich promises for the old as there are for the young, in reference to seeking after God.

And, as a matter of fact, few conversions to God do take place in old age. It is chiefly the young who seek after God. If you had waited till you were much older the cares of life and the deceitfulness of riches would probably have so indurated your heart that it would have become a very difficult thing to arouse you to any spiritual concern. Rejoice, then, in the assurance that you are now, while young, a believer in Jesus.

Your way has its guiding footsteps. You will not wander unless you *choose* to wander. You are walking in an old path, trodden by the feet of many thousands of pilgrims. They who, through faith and patience, are inheritors of the promises, have left for you "footprints on the sands of time." Above all, your Great Exempler has indicated the way so that you cannot mistake it (1 Pet ii. 21).

Patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, "a great cloud of witnesses," surround you as you run your spiritual race (Heb. xii. 1). When you are tempted to de spond, or even to despair, under difficulty and trial, you may think of those who have fought the good fight, and finished their course. They—even mighty

prophets—were men of like passions with you; fallible, weak, imperfect; but their prayers were heard and all needed grace vouchsafed to them (Jas. v. 17). So shall it be with you. Young disciples, circumstanced much as you are, have witnessed a good confession, led a consistent life, and died in the faith. The grace which made them bright examples can sustain and ennoble your Christian career. Not only can, but will, if you believingly ask for it.

Christian companionship will often help you. Try to secure at least one really Christian friend. His sympathy, counsel, prayers, experience may, by God's blessing, be of considerable advantage to you. When two walk together because they are agreed, it is for their mutual benefit. Act as if you felt you were among brothers and sisters. Say to those who have been longer in Christ than you, "I am your younger brother now; I am very weak and inexperienced; I want your love and your help while I travel Zionward." They will, I trust, recognise the relationship, and fulfil the law of Christian love (Rom. xv. 1-)7.

And your life may aid others. Young friends of yours may also become friends of Jesus, drawn by the example of your piety to a similar self-consecration.

Remember that if you love God, and are among those who are called according to His purpose, all things are working together for your good (Rom. viii. 28). You cannot see the details of the working, but may confide in its issue. However adverse may be the look of things, it shall be well with them

that fear God (Eccles. viii. 12). In character, position, and privilege the "righteous is always more excellent than his neighbour" (Prov. xii. 26). If there were no other way of securing God's purpose of love concerning you than by working a miracle, He would assuredly work that miracle.

And though there are many mysteries, yet it will cheer you to remember that your path is the right one, and that one more suited to you could not be chosen. You will gradually come to this conclusion by watching God's dealing with you in providence, and also by noting the result of his dealings with others of his servants. Let me tell you what one said who had just been reading through the Books of Samuel:—

"Poor David! What a life he led! I can't say what a feeling his history has given me. I grew so weary of his incessant miseries, and did seem so to sympathise with and understand the endless variety of them, that one thing-and only one-helped me through, and that was the realising how exactly the discipline fitted him for writing the Psalms. One sees how exactly one's own path is chosen by God to fit us for doing the particular work He designed for us from eternity, and how no other path could do so well; and does not that give you a great feeling of contentment and of being satisfied to have things as they are? A little patient endurance will bring us where we shall admire each step of the way with such admira-Oh, what intensity of happiness there is in casting in one's lot with Jesus! I have so much felt lately that it is less the particular enjoyment of the present hour or moment that I care for, than the settled assurance altogether that I am His, and that I am going along the Zionward way which leads straight to His presence. What privileged beings you and I are, to be under His own hands—His own training, and to know it!"

You have heaven in view. Your home is there. Jesus is there, preparing a place for you. Many friends are there waiting for you to join their happy circle. Ah, how clearly did the Apostle realise this delightful prospect when he said, "I am longing to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better."

I fear that few of the Lord's people realise this as much as it is their privilege to do, and that the complaint is too true which a young and heavenlyminded disciple made in writing to a friend who was very "near Home." "It does strike me so very much, in the experience of the few Christians I see, and of the many I hear from, that there is such a tendency to rest in present experience, and in all the daily fluctuations and variations, sins and infirmities, sorrows and trials, which, after all, acquire their real importance only through their connection with eternity. There is, for the most part, comparatively little realisation of the unseen -the ultimate carrying out of all these 'seen' things to their certain issue. I suppose it is experience one must come to by degrees, just in proportion, indeed, as one nears the eternal realities themselves."

No doubt this is a growing realisation. But its

growth depends on the exercise of the believer's faith. It is while we "look at the things which are not seen," that "the Land which is very far off" becomes clearer and more luminous to our sharpened sight; and it is because we so often turn our eyes away from that vision of "things hoped for" that earthliness regains its hold on mind and heart.

Keep, therefore, a steady gaze fixed upon your eternal home. Often ascend Pisgah, and contemplate the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. That crown radiant with celestial glory shines for you, and is reserved for you. That robe, whiter than any fuller's skill could cleanse it, is ready for your adornment. That palm-branch is for you to wave in triumph. That harp of gold is strung for your accompaniment to the new song. That goodly mansion, full of resources of happiness and peace, is empty till you become its tenant. Ah and there, in that Book of Life, stands your name recorded by your Saviour's grace.

Is it possible? Is all this mine? you may well ask, if you think for a moment on what you are in yourself. But you may confidently claim the proprietorship, and rejoice in the sense of it, as you think how you are in Christ, and therefore how all things are yours.

And when that heavenly home is brought actually near to you, when your journey shall almost be finished, with what joy you may regard the closing of your earthly probation! Just on the point of changing faith for sight and hope for fruition, what words shall I select to describe your emotions of

eager delight? May they not fitly be those uttered by the dying Payson?—"The celestial city is full in view; its glories beam upon me; its breezes fan me; its odours are wafted to me; its music strikes upon me; and its spirit breathes into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears as a narrow rill that may be crossed at a single step whenever God gives me permission." "Lucy, dear," said a youthful disciple to a friend who was sorrowing by her bed—"Lucy, dear, it will be leaving you, but it will be only stepping into the arms of Jesus." And a girl of sixteen years, three hours before she died, called her father to her, and, with a smile like an angel's, said, "Papa, I am going; I am so happy."

And now my book is finished. I am sorry, yet glad: sorry, because it has been a pleasant duty to talk to you, and I should like to prolong our conversation; and yet glad, because I want the printing-press to take what I have written and to multiply copies of it, so that I may soon speak to many youthful hearts that need a word in due season. I have tried to make my little book as complete as I could in meeting the difficulties of an earnest inquirer. I cannot suppose it possible that it meets every difficulty of which a solution may be desired, but I believe that it touches on all the chief things which perplex a young person's mind. If, by God's blessing, it shall remove some stumblingblocks out of the way to the Cross, and help to "make straight in the desert a highway for our God," and guide some wanderer's feet into the path of peace, then I shall abundantly rejoice, and Jesus shall "bear the glory."

I believe it will do good; that is, if what comes from the heart goes to the heart, for I know I have spoken to you, dear reader, from a deep and hearty conviction of the nature of the truths I have set before you, and from a fervent desire to win you to Christ; and I am also quite sure that when the Word of the Lord goes forth on its mission of grace it is not without a purpose, and that purpose shall have a success.

"With fearless heart we traverse life's rough way,
For Christ's sweet banner ever floateth o'er us,
And He himself has kindly gone before us;
And, through all these obstructions that would stay
Our rapid course and fill us with dismay,
Has cleared for us a PATHWAY; so that we
Are unimpeded in our march, and free
To follow where He leads from day to day.
And though we do not know what cares may throng
Our steps, yet trustfully we pass along;
For through earth's chequered scenes, or bright or dim,
Our Master's footprints we can clearly trace;
And as in them our toil-worn feet we place,
We joy to think that we are one with Him!"

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